



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Tuesday, 19 November 2019**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday, 19 November 2019**

**The Speaker (The Hon. Jonathan Richard O'Dea)** took the chair at 12:00.

**The Speaker** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## *Bills*

### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (CONTRACTS OF CARRIAGE) BILL 2019**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill received from the Legislative Council, introduced and read a first time.**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. Adam Searle, MLC, advising that the member for Campbelltown will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly. I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a future day.

## *Announcements*

### **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

#### **Messages**

**The SPEAKER (12:03:22):** I report receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That this House notes:
  - (a) continuous cuts over recent years to the resources of Hansard, as well as other operations of the Parliament, including the Library and Research services;
  - (b) the reduction of full-time staff and their replacement by casual, temporary and part time staff in Hansard and other areas of the Parliament (including the attendants in the Legislative Council) is now reaching a stage where it will have a negative impact on both the quality of service provided to members and to the broader community and on the morale of those staff who perform this important work; and
  - (c) the recent announcement of trial changes to the provision of *Hansard* transcripts in the Legislative Assembly which will result in the official record of debate in that House being delayed for days or even weeks.
2. That this House affirms that:
  - (a) every community that elects members to represent them in parliament has the right to access for themselves a timely transparent and accurate account of the matters their representatives are debating, so that they in turn can be discussed, debated and examined;
  - (b) timely access to the record of parliamentary debate is a vital cornerstone of our democracy;
  - (c) the people of New South Wales deserve a Parliament that is properly staffed and resourced;
  - (d) members of this House require a timely, full and accurate account of the debate in the other place particularly when considering legislation originating from that Chamber; and
  - (e) Members of the Legislative Council greatly value the current prompt and efficient service provided by Hansard which allows its members to receive complete transcripts of both its own proceedings and those of the Assembly soon after sittings have concluded.
3. That this House strongly affirms the value of a dedicated Hansard service directly employed by the Parliament.
4. That a message be sent to the Legislative Assembly informing them of this resolution.

I will not comment on those matters, except to say two things. First, the fact that the Legislative Assembly has received a message does not make the items stated in the message accurate. In fact, there are a number of inaccuracies in it, but I will not debate that now. Secondly, I draw the attention of this House to the fact that the trial that was put in place last week—which was not on the basis that the message suggests—has come to an end. I mention that just for the information of members. Hansard has returned to providing the same service, having undertaken that trial on a limited basis for one week.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

*Bills***ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (CASH DONATIONS) BILL 2019****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 14 November 2019.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (12:22:18):** Just to recap what I have already said in this debate, I brought to the attention of the House the fact that every elected member of the Australian Labor Party [ALP] in this Parliament sat mute and did not say a thing to the public prior to the 2019 election about the illegal donation, which has been exposed, at the so-called Chinese Friends of Labor fundraising function. Those opposite took the money, they hid the illegality and they went to the 2019 election completely mute as to the illegal conduct they were covering up. As I said in my earlier contribution, they should all be ashamed of themselves.

It is particularly important to note that the illegal donations were the scam of a former ALP upper House member, Ernest Wong, who only left this Parliament in March of this year, and the New South Wales head office employee Kenrick Cheah, who was employed as a community relations director of NSW Labor. It was then covered up by the most senior Labor official, the general secretary and head of the national right faction of the Labor Party—the all-powerful ALP right faction—Kaila Murnain. Despite important reforms that were introduced in the last Parliament to toughen up our electoral funding laws, the Labor Party nonetheless went ahead and perpetrated this fraud on the electorate.

I remind the House that the Coalition introduced two very important reforms in the last Parliament. The first was to expand the limitation period substantially for any illegality with regard to electoral donations or funding breaches. The second was to increase the penalties substantially. If there is a conspiracy to defraud or to circumvent the electoral funding laws, the maximum penalty is 10 years imprisonment under the Coalition amendment to the legislation. There have been very strong changes to ensure compliance with the electoral funding laws. Notwithstanding that, the Labor Party has been exposed for the scam that it engaged in at the Chinese Friends of Labor dinner.

I will show the necessity of this legislation. On page 77 of exhibit 150 before ICAC in the Operation Aero inquiry the amended disclosure by the Australian Labor Party New South Wales branch shows a \$5,000 donation on 9 April 2015. It is important that that donation is not recorded in the disclosure as being a cash donation; it is simply described as being a "monetary" donation. For the electoral funding officials to have to determine whether that was cash, cheque or otherwise, they would have to go to the receipt and track through all of the documents.

On page 101, the Country Labor disclosure shows Teresa Tay on 9 April 2015 also making a \$5,000 donation. The inquiry has exposed that there is a necessity to make it clear when cash is being donated. Country Labor has been exposed as a complete sham—just an organisation to double the electoral caps from the Labor Party's point of view and, in the cases of unlawful enterprises like the Chinese Friends of Labor dinner, doubling the illegality of conduct. Introducing a rule under the bill that nothing more than \$100 in cash can be donated will provide a clear trace of any illegal donations to the Labor Party.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (12:26:58):** The Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019 is very important, for reasons that I will outline. The bill seeks to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100. It is fundamental to every person in this place that elections are carried out fairly. I speak as someone who has been the victim of illegal practices. I have been the victim of people who engaged in illegal practices, back in 2011. At that time I was the then member for Wyong. Suddenly a candidate appeared on the scene who—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: This has nothing to do with cash donations.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Of course it does. You haven't even heard what I have to say.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The bill is about cash donations.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Yes, and this is about cash donations.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It is about the \$100 cash donation limit. It has got nothing to do with something that happened in 2011.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmeh Singh):** I will hear a further from the member for Wyong.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I just sat there while the member for Ku-ring-gai spoke so he should show some respect. This is absolutely about cash donations. In this case, it was found out through Operation Spicer, many people in my community were approached for donations illegally, because many of them were property

developers. It is on the record in Operation Spicer that a particular person was paid to campaign. He received money to campaign, so he did not have to do anything else, and all of the election materials and things that were used against me in that campaign were funded through this illegal activity that Operation Spicer exposed as the Eight By Five. Why this is important is that we will not get any changes in this area until we have a system—and this is my personal view, not necessarily the view of my party—whereby we go to public funding and have caps on spending. If members want to do what needs to be done then we need to introduce caps on spending in campaigns.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** We have caps on spending already.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** We know that is not true. The member for Ku-ring-gai can pretend, but we know that is not how it happens. We also know that if public funding was provided, the need for people to seek donations—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** If you have knowledge that Labor is breaking the law then tell the Parliament.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** After Operation Spicer—and this is what really affects me—some of those people said they had been cleared. That is clearly not the case because the Independent Commission Against Corruption said it decided not to ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to lay charges against those people because a three-year statute of limitation period under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 had expired and it would be difficult to secure a conviction. That is hardly saying what those people did was right or that they did nothing wrong. It simply says that, as time had passed, no conviction would be secured so no charges were pressed.

Government members point the finger in one direction. However, members in this place who have any fortitude and who are not hypocrites must understand that people on both sides of politics have done the wrong thing in the past. Not a single person could deny that is the case. Let us not stand in here and throw bombs. I have a whole lot of examples. I could talk about Bart Bassett, who held the seat of Londonderry in Sydney's outer west. He knowingly solicited an \$18,000 donation from Nathan Tinkler's property development company, Buldev, for his 2011 election campaign. It was washed through a Canberra-based entity called the Free Enterprise Foundation.

All sorts of schemes are created, the money gets washed through—from both sides—and it is wrong and needs to stop. As a local member, working my heart out for my community, I need to know that the reason for winning or losing an election is based on policies, not on how much money is thrown at a campaign and where that money came from. As an individual member, I say, "Shame on both sides for what they have done in the past." If the member for Ku-ring-gai wants to defend any party's corrupt practices, then shame on him because all members should be outraged by what has gone on. No member should try to make excuses in this place. Such practices, from both sides, are wrong and have undermined public confidence in the Parliament because the public knows—and people say this to me all the time—that interests outside the parties make the decisions now and not the individuals within the Parliament.

My community is still outraged by what happened. I was returned as member for Wyong at the next election. My margin has increased because people know—and I am pleased to put on record—that I obtained a loan to run my election campaign. I tried to self-fund my campaign because I believe candidates should be responsible for themselves. The bill represents a good move and a step forward by the Government, but it is not enough. Both parties must continue to work towards a system of publicly funded campaigns with no more donations. Not a single member in this place would feel good having to seek donations and having pressure put on them to do so by those above, especially when they do not know who is attending an event and with whom their photograph is being taken. At some stage down the track the person may produce that photo and say the member was standing next to an illegal donor. All members in this place face that all the time.

Let us be realistic. Mr Righteous on the other side of the House, the member for Ku-ring-gai, says the problem lies only on this side. It does not. It lies on both sides, and always has. Every time the laws change everyone tries to work out a way around them, and we should all be ashamed of that. Every member in this place should stand up in Parliament and say, "We do not want to accept these practices any more." We want honest elections based on policy decisions, not on who can raise the most money. That is how the system currently works. As I said, this is my personal position as a member who lost his seat because someone went into the market, engaged in illegal practices and was able to use the money against me to unseat me. My community could not believe the amount of money thrown around in that campaign. People say to me that they would rather have people who are there for the community, not people who are there because donors—most of whom are illegal, as Operation Spicer stated—are giving them money for decisions.

Mining has always been one of the biggest issues in my community, and Liberal members stood there wearing their nice big red T-shirts saying "Water Not Coal" and made an absolute commitment to my community that they would move legislation and ban mining in the catchment. Barry O'Farrell said "no ifs, no buts". Members of the Australian Coal Alliance, the local organisation opposed to coalmining in the area, spoke to shadow Cabinet. The current Premier sat on that shadow Cabinet that gave an absolute guarantee to my community it would not allow mining to go ahead. Guess what happened straight after the election? Those opposite backflipped and allowed the mining company to put in an application that has now been approved. No-one in my community believes there was not some sort of influence involved in that decision-making process. Chris Hartcher, the Minister for Resources and Energy at the time, was a key person—

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Try saying some of that outside.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** It is outside; it was revealed in Operation Spicer. I am relying on the facts.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Chris Hartcher was identified as one of those people who—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: This mining tirade that the member for Wyong is going on about has nothing to do with cash donations, which is the topic of the bill. He has not made reference to one cash donation to do with Operation Spicer in all his tirade. He has not referred to one cash donation. This is a bill about cash donations.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** To the point of order: The member for Ku-ring-gai has not identified the standing order to which his point of order refers.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Under which standing order does the member for Ku-ring-gai take his point of order?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It is relevance.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** The member for Wyong is being generally relevant.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Every member should be outraged by what has happened. The member for Ku-ring-gai says that having a \$100 cap on cash donations has nothing to do with it. Of course it does. Why would a cap be put on donations if people did not think there was something wrong with the system? The way the donation system works allows people to get around it and that is why the bill is needed. I absolutely support the bill. We will not clean up the system unless we go the whole hog and introduce public funding. That way candidates will not have to rely on donations or doing favours for other people. [*Extension of time*]

I suppose some people will make a donation because they think you are a nice person. But in most cases it is generally because either they support the way you think or maybe down the track they want you to act on their behalf on a particular issue. Something is always tied to donations; anyone here who does not think that is the case is blindingly ignorant. As a Parliament, we should ensure that the decisions we take are the best decisions because it is the right thing to do, not because we fear upsetting someone who has given us money.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Why didn't you disclose the \$100,000 illegal donation before the election?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Order! The member for Ku-ring-gai will come to order.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I have just said that I condemn that as well. I condemn every practice and the path that has been taken.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Your party knew about it, and people in your party know about it. You probably knew about it.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** I did not know about it, that is why I got a loan to fund my election campaign. That shows what I knew about how much other people were getting. Public opinion has reached rock bottom when it comes to politicians and donations. The public sees too often that politics is corrupted and that the community is not getting the outcomes it deserves. I argue that both sides should get together to properly fix the system so that none of us is constantly besmirched by the actions of others. Whilst we have a system that relies on donations there will always be someone trying to get around that system. To say otherwise is just dishonest. The establishment of Operation Spicer and its results, which are currently being looked at by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, prove that there will always be people who will try to get around the rules and the system.

Let us be honest and acknowledge that the system is broken. Tinkering around the edges—such as imposing a cap of \$100 or \$50 on donations—will not fix it. We know that in Newcastle people were taking donations in paper bags and were being funded through intricate schemes such as Eight By Five or the Free Enterprise Foundation. We know also through the evidence that there was a system in place in the Labor Party. I do not agree with that scheme for a second. In fact, Labor Party members are probably under more scrutiny because we submit individual returns and make personal declarations.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Order! The member for Auburn will cease interjecting.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Perhaps it would be a step forward if every member in this place had to submit a personal declaration. But I still say that whilst there is a system in place that relies on donations there will always be issues. Not one member in this place, if they were being absolutely honest, would disagree with that. This is not the position of my party; this is my personal position as someone who almost lost his house and who became unemployed. I discovered through Operation Spicer that that happened because of dirty, illegal money. Members should wait until it is their turn before they disagree with me. They should wait until it happens to them, to lose their livelihoods and to see the impact on their family and the way their community looks at them, all because other people have engaged in illegal practices. You cannot understand it until you go through it. Members can throw all the bombs they want in this place but they should be honest. Every member on both sides knows that in the past people have done the wrong thing. Let us put our hands up and say, "Yes, we acknowledge that. Let us try and fix it." Let us get rid of the political point-scoring in this place and try to do the right thing for a change.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:42:18):** I speak on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash of over \$100. Further, the bill will ensure that significant political donations are traceable and transparent and therefore that such donations cannot be made in secret. This will limit opportunities to disguise the true source of political donations. The bill gives effect to one of the Government's commitments by adding a new section to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. This new provision makes it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100.

In terms of stakeholder management, the Department of Premier and Cabinet has consulted with the NSW Electoral Commission on the proposal to prohibit cash donations and the terms of this bill. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already provides a strong framework for political donations in New South Wales. Moving forward, this reform is an Australian first. It puts New South Wales at the forefront of transparency and integrity in political participation in the country and in the democratic world. This Government will not take a backwards step when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political processes. The bill amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash of over \$100. This change will make it easier to trace and account for political donations by removing potential opportunities to disguise their true source.

The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already establishes a framework for political donations which includes donations caps and other requirements and provisions. For example, the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported. Subject to the existing caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions, it will still be possible to make and accept political donations that exceed \$100 using alternative payment methods. It is only cash donations, which cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for, that exceed \$100 which will be banned. The \$100 threshold has been carefully considered to strike the right balance between ensuring that political donations are traceable while avoiding an unreasonable administrative burden on parties, candidates and donors. The \$100 limit allows for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event.

The prohibition will not affect the application of existing provisions in the Act, which ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements. A contravention of the proposed prohibition of cash donations of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act, which carries a maximum penalty of \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years, or both. These penalties are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting a donation from a liquor and gaming establishment or a property developer. The anti-avoidance provision at section 144 of the Act will continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements. I understand the Opposition supports this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (12:46:35):** I speak in debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019, which reforms the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to prohibit political donations in cash that exceed \$100. The purpose of the amendment is to make political donations more traceable

and transparent. Donation laws requiring the transparent handling of funds are critical to ensuring public trust in our democratic institutions. There have been too many instances in New South Wales where political parties have breached current laws. The Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] has undertaken and continues to undertake several investigations and has made corruption findings in relation to electoral funding breaches over the last decade. During this period there have been multiple instances of donations made in cash that breach electoral laws. The nature of these cash donations makes it easier to hide their origins, making it possible for donation laws to be circumvented.

There have been a number of major operations by ICAC. I will discuss two recent operations, Operation Spicer and Operation Dasha. These operations identified a number of former members of this House who solicited donations from prohibited donors and then tried to hide the hundreds of thousands of dollars they had sought. I turn first to Operation Spicer. The ICAC investigated allegations that during the lead-up to the 2011 New South Wales State election certain New South Wales Liberal Party candidates and others solicited and received political donations which were not declared, as is required by the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981. The allegations included that some of these political donations were made by and received from prohibited donors, such as property developers, and some exceeded the applicable caps on political donations.

The commission also examined whether in the lead-up to the 2011 New South Wales State election members or associates of the New South Wales Liberal Party used or attempted to use the Free Enterprise Foundation as a means of disguising the true identity of donors and evading the prohibition on receiving political donations from property developers. I will go through the long list of former members of this Parliament investigated by ICAC. They start with Andrew Cornwell, former member for Charlestown, Garry Edwards, former member for Swansea, and Michael Gallacher. Michael Gallacher is interesting because there was no finding against him. Of course, I have a heckler in the Chamber who is absolutely right to say there was no finding against Michael Gallacher.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Point of order: I ask that the member return to the leave of the bill, which is about cash donations—donations in cash or not. We are not banning donations. We are talking about the manner in which it is done.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** Whilst the bill is quite specific, the member is being generally relevant.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** Some of them did not actually have findings against them but it destroyed their political careers. Michael Gallacher, as a former police Minister, is a prime example of that. We read about him in the papers today. I hope that the Government gives him a formal apology. It destroyed his political career. Others included Timothy Owen, a former member for Newcastle; Christopher Spence, a former member for The Entrance; Chris Hartcher; Craig Baumann, a former member for Port Stephens; Darren Webber, a former member for Wyong; Bart Bassett, a former member for Londonderry; and Marie Ficarra, a former member of the Legislative Council. There were major issues. They either stood down or had to leave Parliament. Some had to go to the crossbenches. I will turn now to the finding of facts by the Independent Commission against Corruption. ICAC found that the people I have mentioned, plus plenty of others, acted with the intention of evading laws—

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Point of order: I understand the Temporary Speaker's previous ruling. But if the member is now going to quote from a report that has nothing to do with this bill then clearly he is straying.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** This is a second reading debate. The member is being generally relevant.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** It concerns me that members opposite are trying to stop me from talking about these operations. We should all acknowledge that both sides of this House have had to deal with horrific forms of corruption. We are dealing with one now in the Labor Party—the \$100,000 donation to a former general secretary—but I cannot talk about that in any detail until the report comes out, although I am sure those opposite will. I have mentioned a lot of people who are no longer in this House. They either lost their seats in the 2015 election or had to resign.

Then we go to Operation Dasha, which happened very recently, and concerned Daryl Maguire, a former member for Wagga Wagga. In that operation—in July of last year—Maguire accepted a cash donation and sought further donations. There were also allegations concerning public officials and former councillors from Canterbury City Council. I will not go into all the details. However, the background of what happened and its impact demonstrates why it is so important that this bill gets up. Indeed, that is why the bill is basically being supported by both sides of this House. As I have said, time and again we have seen corruption rear its dirty head in New South Wales. That has meant members of this Parliament have either had to be removed or—as we have seen previously—go to jail. We need to have complete transparency in our donation laws.

I return to Operation Dasha. Daryl Maguire resigned in 2017 from his seat of Wagga Wagga after admitting he sought payment to help broker a deal with a property developer. At that time, Labor called on Premier Berejiklian to launch a wider inquiry into the conduct of Mr Maguire and other MPs, which she refused to do. About that time, the Liberals cut ICAC's budget and restructured it to engineer the removal of Megan Latham—the commissioner who had led the investigation into a Liberal Party fundraiser before the 2011 State election. That is the one I have just discussed. Once again, we see more cuts to ICAC by this Government. That is a problem for both sides of this House and it needs to be dealt with. It saddens me that Ministers sit in this House heckling when they should be supportive of it. They should own up to the issues in their own party, including with lobbyists and this issue.

In 2016 the New South Wales Electoral Commission found the State Liberal Party received almost \$600,000 in unlawful donations in the lead-up to the 2011 State election—mostly from property developers. The commission had frozen \$4.4 million in election funding in the wake of revelations that the party had used money from banned donors to help bankroll its 2011 State election campaign. Prior to 2011 the Labor Party in government was on the nose. It was on its way out. It had been in government too long. But it amazes me that the Liberal Party nevertheless still sought millions of dollars from prohibited donors to bankroll its campaign. I will not go into the resignation of Barry O'Farrell because that involved a bottle of wine, not money. In this legislation the limit of \$100 was set to allow for minor donations to continue to be made in cash—for example, buying raffle tickets and payment for events-entry at grassroots fundraisers. It is important that we do not stifle the ability of candidates to raise money in that manner.

Individual electorate campaigns and local government elections are often run by groups of dedicated community members who raise small sums of money to ensure they can have a voice in our local democracies. While it is critically important for our democracy that election funding is transparent and fair, it is also important that small-scale campaigns can be run without unduly burdensome administrative requirements. The \$100 limit strikes a reasonable balance between those two requirements. This amending bill does not make any further changes to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. Any cash donations continue to count towards the donation cap and the disclosure cap for individuals, businesses and political parties. The Opposition supports the proposed amendments to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (12:55:42):** I support the Electoral Funding Amendments (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. The exact problem that confronts us today has been demonstrated by the member for Prospect—that is, an inability to face facts about what is occurring today at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The member for Prospect canvassed the history of the New South Wales Parliament but failed to get to the point—that is, the reason members are participating in this debate today is because of current actions of the Labor Party. Currently ICAC is investigating whether the New South Wales Labor Party, branch officials, members of Chinese Friends of Labor, political donors and others entered into or carried out a scheme to circumvent prohibitions or requirements under part 6 of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 relating to political donations. That inquiry is taking place down the road from the New South Wales Parliament as I speak.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Justice I am very pleased to participate in the second reading debate on the bill. On 16 October the bill was introduced in the other place by the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Don Harwin, it was received in this House on 23 October 2019 by the Minister for Transport and Roads, and the Minister for Water, Property and Housing moved for the bill's second reading on 14 November 2019. The bill reflects a single but important reform: To ensure the integrity of electoral funding in this State and consequently the integrity of democracy of the State. That goes to the heart of the role of members of Parliament—to represent the people of New South Wales—and that is based on trust. Representation is firmly based on members' ability to conduct themselves within the law of this great State.

I am particularly pleased to support the bill given my previous role as a member of the parliamentary Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I am proud of the important reforms, which were developed, made and promoted by that committee, that subsequently led to changes to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The commission was established a number of years ago as an independent organisation. Its role is to protect the public interest and to prevent breaches of public trust by guiding the conduct of public officials in the New South Wales public sector. The commission was established by a former New South Wales Government in response to growing community concerns about the integrity of public administration in New South Wales. The matters before ICAC today fit precisely into ICAC's remit. It is disappointing for all members of this House that those matters are still occurring.

Many of the reforms that resulted from the ICAC process are reflected in the Act that is being amended today. The Act received assent in 2019 prior to the New South Wales State election campaign. I would argue that it strengthened the integrity of the democratic process that took place in the lead-up to, and the conduct of, that

election. The Electoral Funding Act 2018, which the bill seeks to amend, already provides a robust regulatory framework for the making and receipt of political donations in New South Wales. The bill will further strengthen that framework in relation to political donations made or received in cash. Specifically, the bill will amend the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds \$100. The change will make it easier to trace and account for significant political donations, removing potential opportunities to disguise their true source.

The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already establishes a rigorous framework for political donations, which includes donation caps, donation requirements and prohibited donor provisions. For example, the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported. The Act also prohibits donations from property developers and those involved in tobacco, liquor or gambling industries. The bill strengthens that framework by ensuring that donations over \$100 are traceable and transparent. The reform will strengthen the ability of the Electoral Commission to identify potential contraventions of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act.

Improving the traceability and transparency of donations over \$100 will make it harder to mask the source of a significant political donation. It will promote compliance with the legislative framework for political donations while improving the integrity of the electoral system more broadly. The bill makes simple changes to the regulatory framework that are proportionate and measured. Subject to the existing caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions, it will still be possible, using alternative payment methods, to make and accept political donations that exceed \$100. Only cash donations that cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for and that exceed \$100 will be banned. The \$100 threshold has been carefully considered to strike the right balance between ensuring that political donations are traceable and avoiding an unreasonable administrative burden on parties, candidates and donors.

The \$100 limit provides for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event. The prohibition will not affect the application of existing provisions in the Act, which ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements. The current aggregation provisions will continue to apply to cash donations, subject to the existing exemption in section 57 of the Act for certain small donations of \$50 or less. A contravention of the proposed prohibition of cash donations of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act, which carries a maximum penalty of \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years or both. The penalties are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting a donation from a property developer.

The anti-avoidance provisions at section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements. The bill makes a proportionate and necessary change to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. The bill will strengthen the legislative framework for political donations in New South Wales by making political donations more transparent and traceable. The reform is an Australian first and puts New South Wales at the forefront of transparency and integrity for political participation in the country and the democratic world. This Government will not take a backward step when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political processes. As the member for Prospect said, it is time members opposite started talking about today and stopped living in the past.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (13:03:42):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. The Opposition supports the bill. I commend the Government for introducing this important reform. However, the Government must be mindful of a couple of issues in the bill, which may need some amendments. I will raise one particular concern later in my contribution. The bill seeks to amend the Electoral Funding Act by inserting new section 58 to impose a limit of \$100 on political donations made in cash.

The term "political donation" is already defined in the Act and includes a gift made to or for the benefit of a party or a group of candidates, as well as an elected member, a candidate or an entity when it is intended that the whole or part of the gift be used for the sole or substantial purpose of an election or to enable the making or reimbursement of a political donation or the incurring of electoral expenditure. A political donation may also include party membership fees and contributions made at fundraisers that are made for no consideration and where those payments are taken to be a gift under the Act.

The new section makes it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100. The capping of cash donations will allow for better transparency and enforcement of political donation rules by ensuring that donations exceeding \$100 are made by means such as electronic transfer or cheque, which are easily traceable. My only concern is around gift cards being used as a credit cards. I would appreciate it if the Minister addressed that issue in his speech in reply. We are aware that gift cards are now used as bank cards. Payments made by gift cards could be made in such a way that they were untraceable. That issue requires

further clarification. For example, gift cards purchased at a post office or certain news agencies are often used to make purchases on the internet and they do act as a bank card or credit card. For the purposes of this bill, are those gift cards able to be used for the purposes of political donations? If they are and they do not fall within the scope of this bill, those transactions would not be traceable, and that would be an issue. I seek further clarification on that.

So much more needs to be done in this space, but it is not only for the State Government to tackle this issue, it is also for the Federal Government. While developer donations are still legal at the Federal level, all the State-level efforts in this space for both local government and State election purposes are inadequate. In this climate, where political donations, including developer donations—which are clearly banned at the State level—continue to be acceptable at the Federal level, there are concerns for all political parties, particularly the major political parties that still rely on these donations. The potential impact and undue influence that developers who donate at a Federal level can have on other elections is concerning. I note that New South Wales local government elections will take place next year and candidates within all the parties will seek preselection. I would be greatly concerned if there were candidates who were being influenced in any way, shape or form by individuals making donations at a Federal level to political parties and then seeking preselection at a local government level or to influence the outcome of the preselection process.

I raise that concern for all parties—my own, in particular. I always give my own party some advice. Over the years I have experienced a whole range of issues as the member for Bankstown. I have seen corruption at its worst. My council was amalgamated with a council that still has an unfinished ICAC investigation. I never agreed to that. I raise concerns because that ICAC investigation is still not complete, but we were forcibly merged with that council. Next year we will have a local government election. Section 144 of the Act provides a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment for a person who enters into a scheme, whether alone or with others, for the purpose of circumventing political donation rules, which may also apply to a contravention of the new section 50A created by the bill.

I am sure all members will agree that it is critically important for the public to be confident that our electoral system is transparent. While the bill helps to ensure the integrity of the system to some degree, more reforms are needed at all levels of government to ensure that we eliminate the influence of people, such as developers, on our system of government. I welcome those particular changes and I note that there is provision to allow for some sorts of cash donations for raffles and so forth. I want to be confident that any cash donation above \$100 is traceable and transparent so that if the Electoral Commission undertakes an investigation there is an opportunity to trace those funds. It is important that we clarify that the bill cannot be circumvented in any way, shape or form by the use of gift cards or bank cards that are not easily traceable. I mentioned earlier that there could be some opportunity for abuse in that regard. I would like the Minister to clarify that in his reply.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (13:10:57):** I support the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. People throughout our community need to be able to have faith in our electoral system. The reason we have rules around electoral funding and donations is to know that there is not disproportionate hidden influence on the politicians who are making decisions in places like this. The purpose of it being out in the open is so that when I advocate for a policy the people know that I am supportive of that policy. If someone has supported me financially to do so, that can be seen: It is transparent and on the record.

Not only that, donations are also capped so that any influence is not disproportionate to the influence any other member of the community may choose to have on the political process. Donations are a healthy element of our political process. They are a healthy way for a member of a community to put their support behind a cause that they believe in. As long as it works within a regime of caps and transparency, it is like donating time on an election day. It is about someone putting their effort, money and support towards a particular cause. That is a good thing. Democracy needs the involvement of people to make it work.

Why are we here today? This bill has been introduced because some people have deliberately tried to exploit the rules to hide the influence they seek to have, to hide the identity of the people making donations and, at the same time, exceed the allowable caps. An individual wanted to make a \$100,000 donation without being known and to pretend it came from donations underneath the cap of many other people. It turned out that the only way that was achievable under the current arrangement was to make the donation in cash because there is no cheque, electronic transfer or bank debit. You can only see that cash was donated and it could have come from anybody. That was the scheme hatched by the General Secretary of the Labor Party to hide the source of that donation to the party. This is different from the mudraking and smearing that some Labor members have engaged in this morning, because it is still happening. The beneficiaries of the scheme are still on the other side of the Chamber, some of them on the front bench. That is the difference.

Under Premier Mike Baird we amended the Act after various things were exposed by ICAC. We amended section 144, increased the penalties and closed the door on activities that had become apparent. Never mind that

many of the people whose careers were destroyed had no findings against them at ICAC but were collateral damage for an overenthusiastic Geoffrey Watson; when issues were exposed we legislated to close those loopholes. This is one more loophole that has become apparent because of activities benefiting Labor in recent times and benefiting people still sitting on the Opposition benches. That is the difference. We are dealing with an activity by those on the other side of the Chamber that is corrupting the system and needs to be fixed.

Now that we have found out about this loophole, we are closing it—just as we closed the last lot under Premier Baird when they became apparent through the ICAC process. The Liberal Party and The Nationals will always move to fix and tighten legislation in the interests of transparency and integrity so that people can have confidence in the system. It is a sad day when we have to do this, but that is the reality and we are dealing with it. It would be a far better thing if the Labor Party would leave aside the pretence that this is even-handed and happens on both sides. They did not move to close this loophole, even though they probably became aware of it long before we did. It would have been common knowledge on the other side of the House.

**Debate interrupted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Gurmesh Singh):** I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Announcements*

**CHAMBER NOISE MONITORING**

**The SPEAKER:** For this question time only, I have allowed the member for North Shore and the member for Blue Mountains to each wear a noise dosimeter, which is a device that is used to measure and assess exposure to noise. It does not record any spoken words. Professor Catherine McMahon, the Director of Audiology at Macquarie University, is sponsoring the hearing screening. She will be sharing the results with the Parliamentary Friends of Hearing Health and Deafness on World Hearing Day, which is 3 March 2020, to highlight the importance of hearing health. I acknowledge in the gallery David Brady, CEO of Hear For You, and Sally Piper from Hearing Education Application Research at Macquarie University, guests of the member for North Shore.

*Visitors*

**VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** Today is International Men's Day, which aims to raise awareness of men's mental health and suicide prevention. I extend a very warm welcome to the gallery to Mathew Dillon of the Blue Bow Tie Project. I am wearing a blue tie, as are a number of other people. Matthew is the suicide prevention counsellor and operations manager at The Parks Community Network, Wetherill Park, and is a guest of the member for Prospect. I also welcome student leaders from Maronite College of the Holy Family, St Patrick's Marist College and Macarthur Girls High School, who are guests of the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, and acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans, and member for Parramatta. I too welcome Peter and Sue Newham, guests of the Government Whip, and member for Terrigal. I acknowledge Momo Romic and Simon Derevnin, guests of the member for Cabramatta.

I acknowledge Blackalls Park Public School Principal Merrita Jeffrey and students including Oliver Croft, Landon Ford, Eric Halbesma, Hayden Dwyer, Keeley McCormack and Charlotte Lazzam, guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. Finally, I acknowledge Edward, or Ted, Carey, a nonagenarian member of the public who has long followed question time in both State and Federal parliaments. He is currently in hospice care, but I have no doubt that he would be here with us if he were able—and perhaps he is watching. I know that his granddaughter Emily works as a ministerial liaison officer in this place. I hope Ted is okay, and I am sure he is proud of Emily.

*Question Time*

**BUSHFIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE**

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:21:38):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. At the weekend the mayor of Kempsey slammed the Treasurer's announcement of \$220,000 for areas affected by fire, saying, "Anyone would realise it's just nothing." Why does the Treasurer not provide genuine recovery funds for bushfire communities instead of this pathetic insult?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:22:14):** Stay tuned.

**BUSHFIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:22:54):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the devastating fires and how the Government will assist with the recovery effort?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:23:08):** I thank the member for Clarence for his question and acknowledge that his community has been hit hard by fires not just in the past few weeks but since July. A number of our colleagues in this place have been battling fires in their communities and have been there to support them. The haze that surrounds greater Sydney today is a stark reminder of what many of our communities are experiencing, especially in northern New South Wales. We know that while the fires are burning—and in fact over 45 fires are burning—for many communities the recovery has started. I say to the people of New South Wales that our Government is there to support them today and in the weeks and, in some cases, years ahead as they rebuild their communities. Today I am pleased to announce, on behalf of the New South Wales Government, that we will be providing a fund of up to \$25 million just to support the clean-up.

I make this very clear: This money is specifically to support residents and communities in the clean-up. It is to pay for the removal of hazardous materials—sometimes, unfortunately, asbestos-contaminated materials—concrete slabs and other dangerous debris. We know—unfortunately from past experience—that communities want to get on with their lives. The simple task of cleaning up, removing the rubbish and being able to move ahead is a challenge. This funding amount will help many residents and communities across the State. I want to state that this is just the beginning. This does not include other assistance that the Government will be providing these communities by way of allowing them to build their infrastructure and other supportive measures in the coming weeks and months. This is an important commitment to give confidence to our communities that they can start the job. I want to add that in addition to providing this fund of \$25 million the Government will also be waiving all the levies which people pay when they go to a tip or dispose of rubbish.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** How generous of you, Gladys!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There will not be an exchange.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite do not appreciate that for some locals this could be in the thousands of dollars, just to clean up. For me one of the most humbling experiences in this job is to talk to people who have lost everything—to hear their experiences and to see the challenges that face them. The Government knew, from the experience in Tathra, what it meant for locals to be able to have the debris removed so that they could then start rebuilding their lives. We believe that \$25 million will go an extremely long way to support these efforts, as will relieving thousands and thousands of dollars of pressure from individuals who would otherwise have to fork out that money just to clear out the rubbish or the rubble that is left of their homes. If those opposite have a problem with that they should speak up about it, because, frankly, this is when we should be there to support our communities.

I also want to stress that the Government appreciates that for some communities—the fires are still raging and will come through—the debris is not yet in a condition where it can be removed, but this is a huge boost for local residents. The Government knows this from previous experience. I commend Euan Ferguson, our Bushfire Emergency Recovery Coordinator, because what he learnt from Tathra we are applying here. The difference is—because of the scale of the task—that the fund is much larger than that applied to Tathra. Also, the Government is moving at greater speed. It is not waiting until the fires are out before it provides the recovery money; it is starting now. I stress that this is not the total package of support that the Government will be providing. This is just to start the clean-up—to ensure the clean-up occurs so that people can get on with their lives. For many people the difference between having to fork out thousands of dollars and having the Government do that for them will be a huge relief. It will reduce stress. It is very important for our communities. [*Extension of time*]

As was the case in Tathra, the Government will not discriminate between those whose property was insured and those whose property was not insured. Everybody will be treated the same but those whose property is insured will be able to spend the total amount of money received from the insurance company on rebuilding, not on cleaning up. We assume that those who are not insured would not otherwise be able to afford to clean up the debris. This is a big boost for our communities and I thank the Minister for Emergency Services for ensuring this coordinated approach. I thank the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier and our whole team, because this Government is there to support our communities.

I cannot stress enough that even though some of the fires are raging hundreds of kilometres away, our thoughts and prayers are with local communities that are doing it tough through the deep drought and these fires. With the Government's support and help, these communities will rebuild. The Government will support them every step of the way. This \$25 million will go a long way in ensuring the clean-up and the recovery starts and

that residents do not have to stress, whether they are insured or not insured, about having the funds to clean up. Unfortunately the Opposition has demonstrated a failure to understand that sometimes even going back and forth to the local pit can cost thousands of dollars. That is a cost the New South Wales Government will bear.

**Ms Kate Washington:** It does not even come close to what you took out of national parks.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I will not dignify those interjections with a response but I will say that the Government stands shoulder to shoulder with our communities, no matter where they are, and will support them through this most difficult process.

#### TATHRA BUSHFIRES

**Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (14:30:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I was in Tathra on the weekend, where fires destroyed or damaged more than 100 homes in March 2018. Only six have been rebuilt. It has been almost two years. Can the Minister confirm the cause of the Tathra fire?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:30:31):** Whilst I appreciate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has finally taken an interest in the crisis that this State is facing in relation to bushfires, I highlight the fact that I was not the Minister two years ago. I do not know what sort of criticism she is trying to divert towards—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** He is trying to shirk his responsibility.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Swansea to order for the first time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I do not know what sort of insinuation she is making towards—

**Mr Ryan Park:** You don't know?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is insinuating but if the member had bothered to ask me—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** She asked, "What was the cause?" and you are the Minister.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** There was a Coroner's inquiry into it. If the member wants to know the cause she should look at the Coroner's inquiry.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** There has not been a Coroner's inquiry. That is the point.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** All bushfires are responded to by the Coroner and the NSW Police Force, as the Leader of the Opposition knows.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is question time; it is not exchange time. Members will let the Minister respond. The member can ask a supplementary question, but the Minister should be heard in silence.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** We have 1,400 firefighters on the frontline right now, and 48 fires are being fought. Twenty of those fires are uncontained. Fires have been burning for three months. Right now there is a fire in the Hawkesbury which will threaten the Central Coast. The attempts by the Leader of the Opposition to get political mileage from this natural disaster is nothing more than disgusting. In the three months we have been facing this bushfire, the Opposition leader's effort has been to ask for one briefing. That is all she has asked for.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** You would not even give her that one.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The Leader of the Opposition has had one briefing from the Deputy Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service. Her attempts to politicise this crisis prove to me that she has no leadership capabilities whatsoever. It is disgusting. She has not once asked, in the last two weeks, about the welfare of those 1,400 firefighters that have been on operations. She has not once asked about the welfare of the two Fire and Rescue NSW officers who received medical attention as a result of their work. She has not once visited one of the five evacuation centres that are currently dealing with people who are escaping this natural disaster.

For her to try to take a political advantage, in my mind, proves the very stark contrast between her and the New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian. I implore her to stop trying to take political advantage from

the current situation. I implore her to spend the next three days in this place taking a genuine interest in how the Government has managed this. Even members on her side of the Chamber—members of her own caucus—have said to me privately that this has been the best preparation for any bushfire season. Members of her own side have said this is the best preparation.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I would love to name them but I do not want to embarrass them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Auburn to order for the first time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** When the Premier and I visited Lismore to deal with some of the challenges the member for Lismore is facing she provided us with credit and congratulated the NSW Rural Fire Service for its preparation and capabilities right now. I suggest the member opposite take more interest in the welfare of our officers and less in gaining political advantage.

**Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) (14:35:00):** I ask a supplementary question. My question, of course, is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, your agency, RFS, has indicated that Essential Energy infrastructure owned by the Government caused the Tathra fires. I inform the Minister that there has not been a coronial inquiry. Will the Minister for Police and Emergency Services explain to the House why he has delayed a coronial inquiry into the fires until after June 2020, thereby preventing residents from receiving vital answers and compensation? It has been 2½ years and there is still no coronial inquiry.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:35:44):** Mr Speaker, I actually think that—

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the Minister to wait one moment. The Clerk will stop the clock. I have allowed the member for Strathfield and Leader of the Opposition to ask a supplementary question. Members will remain silent and let the Minister answer.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I suspect that question should have been ruled out of order because of its length.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Do you want your badge? Get your badge out.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Mate, if I had a badge you would be in the dock.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** My point of order is Standing Order 129: This is not a laughing matter. This Government has delayed an inquiry into these fires for 2½ years. The Minister thought the inquiry had been held when it has not. You had best know your portfolio, Minister.

**The SPEAKER:** That is enough from the Leader of the Opposition for today.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I know my portfolio enough to know that I cannot instruct a judicial officer, the Coroner, to do anything. I know my portfolio enough to know that.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** He tried to impersonate a police officer.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** And you are impersonating a Labor leader.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Jodi, I really preferred you when you were a Liberal. I thought you were a much easier person to get on with when you were a member of the Liberal Party.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I know enough about my portfolio to know that I cannot instruct the Coroner to investigate anything. The Coroner will make those investigations.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Swansea to order for the second time. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** As the Leader of the Opposition has already noted, at the time we knew that the Tathra bushfires were started by infrastructure and by power poles. I am not going to instruct and interfere with a coronial investigation. I am certainly not going to tell the Coroner what to do. Whoever wrote your

questions today, Jodi, needs to gain an understanding of the judicial processes in this State. I, like everybody else in the House, will be looking forward to that inquiry.

### BUSHFIRES AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:38:12):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is supporting regional communities affected by fires?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, and Deputy Premier) (14:38:28):** I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question—a member, like most members in regional and rural New South Wales, with an electorate that is enduring fires, drought and a lack of water and, more importantly, enduring one of the toughest periods that we have seen on record for regional and rural communities. It is not just about agriculture, cattle, sheep or communities; it is about the future for regional and rural New South Wales and making sure we give our children a reason to stay in regional and rural New South Wales. It is tough. I want to talk about the opportunity that is in regional and rural New South Wales. I do not want to talk down the opportunities that we have and what a great place it is to live.

There is fantastic housing affordability. Jobs have been created in regional and rural New South Wales through mining, resources, tourism, manufacturing and the investment we are seeing across the board. It is important as a government, even though things are tough, that we talk about the opportunity in the future for regional and rural New South Wales. The member lives in a part of the world that has great opportunities for the future. The infrastructure spend by the Government and investment by business creates clear confidence in the regions. Recent unemployment numbers, or job creation, shows over a 12-month period 40,000 new jobs created in regional and rural New South Wales. In regional Australia—across the rest of the country—only 5,000 jobs were created. In New South Wales there is confidence regardless of how tough it is.

That confidence is driven by good steady government and investment in infrastructure that creates an environment for the private sector to invest. Many politicians will talk about the jobs they have created but those jobs are created by the mums and dads who take risks. They mortgage their homes and show courage to become part of small and medium enterprises. In this State we encourage that level of investment. As a State we are proud of the number of small businesses and proud of a State that continues to grow those small businesses in the bush. One of the areas we can do that in a significant way is to cut through red and green tape. That red and green tape is often around planning. Through the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund the Government has legislated \$4.2 billion, with every cent to be spent in rural and regional New South Wales in five key categories attached to our 20-year economic blueprint for regional and rural New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Port Stephens she is on two calls to order.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** A principal area is special activation precincts. A number of special activation precincts have been identified and implemented in this State. The first was Parkes. You have heard me say before that because of inland rail Parkes is now an inland port. We have already seen significant investment that has attracted big national companies and there are more announcements to come. The Government is the proponent or developer. We go through the maze of planning and environmental impact studies and we prepare and invest in the infrastructure so that businesses can turn up and get a 30-day environmental approval, concierge service and, in some cases, first mover incentives. We are able to get businesses to create jobs.

In Parkes there will be 3,000 to 4,000 jobs created from one precinct. It is no different in Wagga Wagga. I visited the Bomen Business Park with the member for Wagga Wagga, where just over \$29 million has been invested to unlock another special activation precinct. That investment in Wagga Wagga will deliver in excess of 5,500 jobs off the back of inland rail. There are jobs around renewables and different industries such as recycling. Importantly, it is about attracting different jobs, new jobs, great jobs into the regions for regional New South Wales. We do not want our kids to have just any job, we want them to have the best opportunity and best jobs. That is why it is important to focus on unlocking the land of opportunity in regional and rural New South Wales. Right now we are doing it very tough.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the third time. The member will cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Off the back of those first two special activation precincts, the Government announced during the election campaign that Williamtown would be considered for a special activation precinct.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is on three calls to order. This is her final warning.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** The Government has invested in excess of \$11 million for a new aerospace defence precinct that has attracted international players and grown in excess of 5,000 jobs. The investment will come through defence and that is an opportunity for the region to tap into. A special activation precinct is important and will attract investment and create jobs for the future, not just jobs for today. [*Extension of time*]

A fourth area the Government has identified in relation to a special activation precinct is the broader Snowy Mountains. Snowy 2.0 is on its way. There has been significant investment by the Federal Government through pumped hydro, which will change the energy market. There is a big battery underpinning an investment unseen in the region since the inception of Snowy Hydro in its early days. We will get to live the whole Snowy Hydro legacy all over again. We know the mountains are a tourist destination. It is pristine country for both winter sports and summer activities. The Canberra international airport is a gateway on one side of the highway and together with the Port of Eden has led to the announcement of investigative work for a special activation precinct for the Snowy Mountains that includes the Port of Eden. The Port of Eden provides the opportunity for a new international gateway through cruise liners.

It means from a tourism perspective that we can make the mountains and the corridors leading to the mountains the number one destination not just in New South Wales—and not just in winter—but in Australia. It is significant. We can be better than Queenstown. We can be better than Aspen for the people of Jindabyne and the Snowy Mountains. There has been significant investment in national parks by the Government—around \$27 million to unlock the mountain-biking opportunity for an epic trail through the mountains. There are walking tracks in summer. We have already had the amateur Tour de France, L'Étape, for four years in the region, showcasing the mountains. We have announced a special activation precinct for the Snowy Mountains and the region right down to the Port of Eden. It really sets up the region for an opportunity to be a tourism destination that is the envy of the world. It is something that we are very proud of. It is only because the Liberals and Nationals are committed to the regions, including the Snowy Mountains region.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Holsworthy, I recognise in the public gallery today Tony Bear from the Police Association of NSW. He does a great job.

#### **BUSHFIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (14:45:42):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting communities with fire recovery?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:45:51):** I thank the member for Holsworthy and the Parliamentary Secretary for emergency services for her genuine interest in this matter. I start by thanking the tremendous firefighting volunteers and members of our emergency services organisations for the absolutely mammoth effort that they have put forward over the last two weeks, particularly in their efforts to prevent what could have been catastrophic fire conditions reaching their full potential. What we see at the moment is the heartbreaking loss of property, of life and of communities, but this catastrophic fire will not go unabated. Unfortunately, we all know that it could have been a lot worse; given that we have not reached summer yet, it may be a lot worse.

As I said earlier in question time, we are currently fighting 48 bushfires and 20 of those are uncontained. The worst hit areas at the moment are Greater Sydney, the Hunter, the Illawarra, the Shoalhaven district, the central ranges and southern ranges. Because of the size of these fires there is no time for complacency. Some 1,400 firefighters are currently on the ground. They are supported by 90 aircraft currently on deployment and 415 vehicles are supporting our ground operations. To date—and every time I stand in this House this number goes up—there have been 577 homes destroyed. These numbers are expected to increase as further information is received from building impact assessments.

Tragically, since the start of September six lives have been lost to bushfires and summer is not even here yet. The main areas of the State that are affected for the current area operations are the mid North Coast, northern New South Wales, the Northern Tablelands and the Hawkesbury. The Government will ensure that it does everything it possibly can to ensure our fireys have the resources that they need. On Sunday the aptly named DC-10 very large air tanker [VLAT] entered the fight. The VLAT, which originates all the way from Albuquerque in the United States, is capable of dropping a whopping 38,000 litres of water and fire retardant to bolster our defence on the ground. It will complement the other large air tankers that we have in our arsenal.

Over the weekend the Treasurer and I joined the members for the electorates of Port Macquarie and Oxley to see the devastation in Port Macquarie and Kempsey. NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons took us up to get a bird's-eye view of the fireground so that we could fully appreciate the devastation that these fires have created across the State of New South Wales. Local troops detailed to us what they are facing

on the mid North Coast at the Kempsey Fire Control Centre. While in Kempsey, we spoke to the disaster recovery coordinator, Euan Ferguson. He is focusing on a number of things, including the welfare of those who have been displaced, the rebuilding of infrastructure, the management of donated goods, the support of primary producers and the support for small business. Despite all of this, we know that communities are hurting and they are hurting right now. In Kempsey I met a man named Stephen who showed us a photograph of his property, which had essentially melted. It was completely destroyed, save for an Australian flag, which I was delighted to see was flying high despite the devastation.

The response to the bushfires is far from over. The Government is ready to recover with the communities. As the Premier has already stated, the Government is providing up to \$25 million for the clean-up of hazardous materials, including the removal of asbestos-contaminated material released as a result of the fires, dangerous debris, concrete slabs and dangerous trees. This is just the first step. Once we know more about the specifics and the extent of the devastation, the next step will involve the provision of additional funding for rebuilding and repairing infrastructure.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the tremendous goodwill of the not-for-profit and corporate sectors. I am pleased that on the weekend James Packer committed \$1 million to the NSW Rural Fire Service. I assure the House that that will go straight to frontline state-of-the-art kit and support for the volunteers. It is yet another example of the Packer family opening its chequebook, as it did only last year for the Invictus Games. Businesses big and small have been chipping in, in support of both the firefighters and the communities. Coles and Woolworths have both assisted with opening their stores to our caterers to help feed the many frontline volunteers. The National Australia Bank today announced that it has donated \$150,000 to assist communities impacted by the fires. This amount includes \$50,000 for assistance on the ground, \$50,000 to the Red Cross and dollar-matching customer and employee donations up to \$50,000. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** Before the Minister starts his additional two minutes, I note he is speaking on emergency services, but also as the police Minister. I am sure he would be glad to know that the President of the Police Association of NSW, Tony King, is also in the gallery today.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Just this morning my office spoke to Byron Bay manufacturer Australian NaturalCare, which has sent bottles of magnesium vitamins to Port Macquarie Priceline for distribution to the local firefighters. Every little bit counts. We live in a sunburnt country and we face bushfires and floods. However, despite what the environment has thrown to us, this fortnight has been proof positive that Australians are the most resilient people in the world. After spending a day gaining an appreciation for the devastation the fires have caused, the Treasurer and I joined the member for Port Macquarie at Lake Cathie for a community barbecue that thanked firefighters and other emergency services workers for their efforts. I have never seen a thankyou barbecue so well deserved. Across the State, our volunteers on the frontline from every corner of the State have worked relentlessly to beat the blazes. So far we believe they have saved up to 3,800 homes. Communities have rebuilt before in this State and they will rebuild again. The Government is in it for the long haul and will do whatever it can to help these communities recover.

#### TATHRA BUSHFIRES

**Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:52:26):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Moments ago the Minister told us to read a coronial inquiry that does not exist. His Government has cut ranger numbers and cut the firefighting budget and has still not confirmed the cause of the Tathra fires 20 months ago. How can bushfire victims have any confidence in him as Minister?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (14:52:56):** I do not understand why the Leader of the Opposition continually wants to use these bushfires for her own political advantage. The reason why the community can have confidence in this Government's emergency services and the response and recovery is that we on this side deliver. We have delivered a record budget in Fire and Rescue NSW. We have delivered a record budget in the NSW Rural Fire Service. We have got 75,000 volunteer firefighters out there ready to go. On the weekend we have got 2,000 volunteer firefighters who are deployed. We have got our own 737 large air tanker, the *Marie Bashir*, which those opposite refused to buy when they were in Government. We have 90 aircraft. As I have already detailed in those statistics, this is the largest firefighting force in the world.

The Rural Fire Service is the largest firefighting force in the world. I have not seen a response to an emergency as we have seen to the current bushfire crisis facing New South Wales. I am delighted that on day two of this operation the Government appointed a recovery coordinator. Euan Ferguson was appointed the day after the emergency was identified by the Rural Fire Service. I am very confident that Euan will be able to work with not only government but also non-government organisations and corporate Australia to deliver the support that we require. I hasten to add that as Minister I am thrilled about the way the community has come together and the appreciation they have shown for the volunteers and the resources that have been on offer.

Only last week the lives of those who live in South Turrumurra were saved thanks to the aviation assets that the State has available to it. Last week I updated the House that the Rural Fire Service has access to information technology that previously it was unable to benefit from. At the beginning of this fire emergency 300,000 people downloaded the Fires Near Me app. It has had 4.1 million hits. The app saves lives. The Premier has announced multimillion dollar packages to the victims in the communities that are suffering as a result of this emergency.

The fact that this has been announced before the emergency has concluded says that we walk the walk as well as talk the talk. As I have said before, I am very disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition is using this emergency for political advantage. I am very disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition has not asked one question about the welfare of officers or about the evacuation centres. On the weekend I joined a number of my parliamentary colleagues to make tea and hand out sausage sandwiches to people at the evacuation centres. She has not bothered to visit them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber. The Minister will continue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The shadow Minister for Emergency Services has not asked me one question in this place all year. I cannot remember who it is but I know I have not been asked one question by the shadow Minister for Emergency Services all year. The shadow Minister for Police and Counter Terrorism in 4½ years as my shadow has only ever asked me one question. I would have more respect for the Leader of the Opposition if she challenged the Government about ensuring that we are providing for the welfare of those who are deployed to save our communities. But she has not. She has decided to go down the route of trying to make political gain. It is very disappointing. The Leader of the Opposition needs access to better research. I remind her that the Coroner is independent. A coronial inquiry normally takes two years. If she wants to know the results of the coronial inquiry, she, like me, needs to wait and see the response.

#### MID NORTH COAST BUSHFIRES

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (14:58:03):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on his recent visit to the mid North Coast and how the Government is supporting emergency services and disaster relief?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer) (14:58:27):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her question and in particular I acknowledge the work she has been doing during the bushfires, which, together with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Water, Property and Housing, I saw firsthand on Sunday.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Poor Mel didn't get a mention in the tweet.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I will come back to you. On Sunday we had the opportunity to visit numerous communities and see firsthand the devastation caused by the fires and the impact they have had on communities across the State. We were able to get a bird's-eye view of the fire-ravaged areas across Kempsey, Taree and Port Macquarie. Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons gave us a tour of the area of operations. It was clear that the damage and destruction was worse than any of us had expected. With the member for Oxley, at the Kempsey evacuation centre we had the opportunity to talk to people who had been forced to flee from their homes. We chatted with Noel, an Indigenous elder, who shared the impact that the fires have had on his community and his mission. He was particularly grateful for the support of the fireys and all the volunteers and members of the New South Wales Public Service at the evacuation centre.

Many members of the Department of Communities and Justice are helping out and supporting those at the evacuation centre. We met Kellie, Tania and Rae, three local women who sprung into action to set up the evacuation centre following the fires. They sorted through donated supplies and made sure that those who attended—some of whom had lost everything—could pick up some clothes, toiletries and essential supplies. We heard from someone whose home had been threatened by fire on five separate occasions in the last fortnight. She was full of praise for the emergency services personnel who had saved her home and most of the houses in her community. That story was repeated time and again. There was significant goodwill for the dedication, generosity, bravery and professionalism of the Rural Fire Service [RFS], the largest volunteer firefighting service in the world.

On Sunday afternoon, with the member for Port Macquarie—and I again congratulate her on the work she has done—I joined with residents from Lake Cathie—not "Lake Cathy", as the locals reminded us—and Bonny Hills at a community barbecue that was put on to thank the local RFS and State Emergency Service crews. Everyone came together in support of the community and particularly in support of the men and women on the front line. Thousands of people turned up to show their appreciation and to donate to the local fireys. As visitors that day, their community spirit stood out to us. That is what makes our country great: When times are tough communities come together in mutual support. The New South Wales Government stands ready not only to help

fight the fires and provide immediate assistance but also, as the Premier has pointed out, to undertake the recovery and rebuilding efforts this week and in the months ahead. That is why this Government insists on strong financial management in this State. We run surpluses not for the sake of it but so that we can respond at times like this. I hear the interjections again.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** There were no interjections. You are making it up as you go.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I hear very well. I have very big ears. I hear everything on that side. Those opposite are speaking about funding. I agree with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services when he said that never before in the history of this State have we seen a Leader of the Opposition and their office politicise an emergency disaster, particularly not just after the event, but actually during it.

**The SPEAKER:** I warn the member for Port Stephens that if she does not cease interjecting she will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** If the Leader of the Opposition actually cared and visited some of these areas she would see how out of sync and out of kilter her remarks and misleading statements in the media are and the hurt and division they cause. The Leader of the Opposition is playing politics, sewing seeds of disunity at a time of despair.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** It is the first time you went up there

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** No. Usually when it comes to times of emergency—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer will resume his seat. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Greg Warren:** It is under Standing Order 129. The Treasurer is trying to politicise a very serious issue—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is being relevant. The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr Greg Warren:** —of the suffering across the State with a cheap shot at the Opposition. It is inappropriate and out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The Labor Party has given the most misleading information to the public that we have seen over the course of this period. It sews division in our community at a time—

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —when there has been record investment across the board, at a time when volunteers and hundreds of men and women are putting their lives at risk on the front line. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Auburn to order for the second time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** When it comes to their allegations about funding—which have proven to be incorrect—half of them stay silent because they are ashamed at their leader and her office for politicising this matter at this time.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Under Standing Order 73, if the Treasurer wants to debate the ethical nature of this House and the goodwill of the Opposition we will do it all night but we will not listen to his cheap shots.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. I call the member for Campbelltown to order for the first time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I place on record again what the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner has said in relation to the budget:

I don't know how many times we've actually got to publicly address this. I've addressed it to the various media outlets that have been fed this story. It is rubbish. It is misinformation. It has been misrepresented and I think it has disgracefully been misrepresented here today and in these sorts of circumstances. We have got more money today than we have ever had before in the history of the organisation. We've got record funding in particular programs. We are the only jurisdiction in this country that's got a dedicated large air tanker, with a budget impact of something like \$26 million to make that possible. I just wish this story would stop floating around. It does nothing to support the cause. These are men and women risking their lives on the front line. We are in the business of instilling community confidence.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** That is leadership. Who do you trust? Do you trust the Rural Fire Service Commissioner or do you trust the Leader of the Opposition?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I know who I trust. Those disgraceful allegations being made on that side of the House should stop.

### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:06:09):** My question is directed to the Attorney General. Given the recommendation of the Ruddock Religious Freedom Review that New South Wales should "amend [its] anti-discrimination laws to render it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a person's religious belief or activity", what action has or will the Government take to extend anti-discrimination laws to encompass religion and conscience, including representations to the draft Commonwealth bill on religious freedom, which will have significant implications for State laws?

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence) (15:06:43):** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question and for his interest in human rights. Under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 it is unlawful in New South Wales to discriminate on grounds of race, sex, disability, age, homosexuality, transgender, marital status or responsibilities as a carer. There is, however, no explicit protection from discrimination on the grounds of religious belief. Race is defined in the Act to include "ethno-religious" origin but only protects some religious groups. For instance, it has been interpreted to include Jewish people but not Muslims. Under the Anti-Discrimination Act, religious bodies and private educational authorities are granted certain freedoms.

Religious bodies are exempt in any act or practice that conforms to the doctrines of their religion and in the ordination, training or education of priests and ministers of religion. Private educational authorities are exempt from provisions making it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex, transgender, marital status, domestic status, disability, homosexuality and age. Anti-discrimination laws as they relate to religious freedoms and protections are currently under review across Australia. In November 2017 then Prime Minister Turnbull announced the appointment of an expert panel to examine whether Australian law adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion. In May 2018 the so-called Ruddock panel delivered the *Religious Freedoms Review* report to the Prime Minister. In December 2018 the panel's report and the Federal Government response were both released. The review recommended changes to religious protections and freedoms. Recommendation 16 of the review stated:

New South Wales and South Australia should amend their anti-discrimination laws to render it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a person's "religious belief or activity" including on the basis that a person does not hold any religious belief. In doing so, consideration should be given to providing for the appropriate exceptions and exemptions, including for religious bodies, religious schools and charities.

A similar recommendation was directed to the Commonwealth Government relating to the enactment of a Commonwealth Religious Discrimination Act. Recommendation 15 of the review stated:

The Commonwealth should amend the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, or enact a Religious Discrimination Act, to render it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a person's "religious belief or activity", including on the basis that a person does not hold any religious belief. In doing so, consideration should be given to providing for appropriate exceptions and exemptions, including for religious bodies, religious schools and charities.

The Commonwealth response to that review committed to commence a process with States to consider recommendations that relate to State and Territory anti-discrimination laws. In April 2019 the Commonwealth asked the Australian Law Reform Commission [ALRC] to inquire into exemptions in anti-discrimination laws. In August 2019 the terms of reference for the ALRC were altered and the reporting date extended until December 2020. In the meantime, there is no date at the moment for an ALRC discussion paper, nor any closing date for submissions. The New South Wales Government will consider the recommendations of the ALRC inquiry once the review is completed.

Also in August 2019 the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon. Christian Porter, released a package of draft legislative reforms on religious discrimination for public consultation. The draft Religious Discrimination Bill 2019 makes discrimination on the ground of religious belief unlawful in a wide range of areas of public life. Consistency between State and Commonwealth legislation is desirable. Under section 109 of the Commonwealth Constitution, when a law of a State is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth the latter shall prevail and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid. The New South Wales Government is considering closely the Federal bill package to note any implications it may have on New South Wales legislation. The

Government will continue to monitor any developments with respect to a Commonwealth Religious Discrimination Bill.

### EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:11:37):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, and Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government has delivered for education?

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (15:14:36):** I commend the member for Riverstone on a great question. It is a great time for delivery of education throughout the State, especially this year. I commend the member for Riverstone for his wonderful approach and commitment to education. He was part of the Catholic diocese of Parramatta for many years before he entered this place. I also give a shout-out to student leaders in the public gallery—they have disappeared. I welcome students from the College of the Holy Family, Macarthur Girls High School and St Patrick's Marist College who are at Parliament today to see democracy in action. Sadly, those on the other side gave such a poor performance they left. The Government is committed to the delivery of education throughout the State.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** No matter where you are, no matter your circumstances, this Government is delivering on the infrastructure to revolutionise schools. The Government is delivering \$6.7 billion over the next four years across 190 new and upgraded schools throughout the State. This is the largest investment in public education infrastructure in the history of New South Wales. I commend the Premier for working hard with Minister Mitchell in the other place to deliver this education revolution. On this side of the House we are delivering for schools across the State. I update the House on seven new school projects delivered in term four this year. They include Denistone East Public School—the member for Ryde is a big supporter—and Old Bar Public School, which the member for Myall Lakes appreciates.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I call the member for Tweed to order for the first time.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Also included is the Quakers Hill East Public School, which I understand the member for Riverstone will open on Friday.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Tweed to order for the second time.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Yesterday the \$18 million redevelopment of Rose Hill Public School was opened. It has 18 new classrooms and a covered outdoor area for the kids. It also has new administration facilities. Members of the community just love the school. Twenty-six new and upgraded schools have been opened this year in addition to the seven I have mentioned. These schools are right across the State. The member for Cessnock will welcome the new school in Cessnock. Marsden Road Public School is in the electorate of the member for Liverpool. The member for Penrith has welcomed a new school in his electorate. The list goes on.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for South Coast and the member for Lane Cove will be quiet.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Members on this side of the House support public and other forms of education but members on the other side of the House want to politicise education.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Cessnock that he is on two calls to order. If he continues to interject he will be on three calls.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** As the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, I indicate that the Government is also investing more in TAFE. This year's budget contains \$1.85 billion for TAFE. This is a 3.1 per cent increase on last year's funding—great news. In addition, we are delivering close to \$140 million in capital expenditure this year alone.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Londonderry will desist from interjecting.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** The Government has also committed \$61.7 million to build eight new Connected Learning Centres [CLCs] at TAFE campuses. The nearly \$140 million investment includes the CLCs, which will be delivered over the next three years in Nambucca Heads, Nelson Bay, Byron Bay, Hay, Jindabyne, West Wyalong, Batemans Bay and Cobar. That investment is on top of the 14 that have already been delivered. We are very proud of our record in education. These are world-class facilities to allow people in the regions to stay in the regions while receiving an education. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** I will wait until House comes to order.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** These world-class facilities allow students from the regions to get a world-class education. They connect communities without all the students having to be physically in the same area. These 14 operational CLCs right across the State have seen a doubling of courses made available in their communities. This expenditure is about looking after those in the regions. I am advised that, at the sites where CLCs have been opened, between 2017 and 2018 commencing enrolments have increased by more than 17 per cent. This is a great result. I give a big shout-out to the member for Tweed, Geoff Provest, who was with me when I opened the Murwillumbah CLC. I thank Michael Johnsen, the member for Upper Hunter, for attending when we opened the CLC at Scone. The member for Clarence, Chris Gulaptis, was with me when we opened the Yamba CLC, the first ever TAFE presence in the Yamba. Well done to the member for Clarence for fighting for this great opportunity for his community.

There is more great news. Recently I was in Bega with the Minister for Transport and Roads, Andrew Constance, looking at the start of stage two of the Bega TAFE upgrade, a multi-trades hub. I can see the Minister jumping up and down to show his excitement about this upgrade. I was in Gunnedah with Minister Anderson for the start of construction of a new trades hub in Gunnedah. The Government contributed \$3 million to that upgrade. This has been a great year for education, with this Government showing its support for all levels of education, not just for primary and high schools but also for TAFE and universities. Members on this side of the House support education, but I am not sure that is the case with members on the other side.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 9/57* dated 12 November 2019. I move:

That the report be printed.

#### **Motion agreed to.**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** I also table the minutes of the committee meeting regarding *Legislation Review Digest No. 8/57*.

### **COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission has resolved to conduct a review of the Health Care Complaints Commission's 2017-18 and 2018-19 annual reports, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

### **COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission has resolved to conduct a review of the 2017-18 and 2018-19 annual reports and other reports of overlooked agencies, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

### **COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **Inquiry**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** As Deputy Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on Children and Young People has resolved to conduct two inquiries into:

- (1) The adequacy of services to assist the children of imprisoned parents in New South Wales.
- (2) A review of the annual reports and other matters in relation to the functions and performance of the office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, and the Office of the Children's Guardian.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ROUTINE OF BUSINESS**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 21 November 2019 to:

- (1) Provide for the following routine of business after the placing and disposal of business:
  - (i) the moving and consideration of the motion that the House take note of Christmas felicitations;
  - (ii) at 4.00 p.m. business of the House and petitions;
  - (iii) further consideration of the motion that the House take note of Christmas felicitations, if not concluded;
  - (iv) private members' statements;
  - (v) community recognition statements; and
  - (vi) the House to adjourn without motion moved.
- (2) Provide for the following time limits on Christmas felicitations:
  - (i) Premier – 10 minutes;
  - (ii) Leader of the Opposition – 10 minutes;
  - (iii) Deputy Premier – 10 minutes;
  - (iv) Deputy Leader of the Opposition – 10 minutes;
  - (v) Leader of the House – 10 minutes;
  - (vi) Member for Keira – 10 minutes;
  - (vii) Member for Terrigal – five minutes;
  - (viii) Member for Shellharbour – five minutes;
  - (ix) Member for Heathcote – five minutes;
  - (x) Member for The Entrance – five minutes;
  - (xi) Member for Cootamundra – five minutes;
  - (xii) Up to five other Government members – three minutes each;
  - (xiii) Up to five other Opposition members – three minutes each; and
  - (xiv) Up to three crossbench members – three minutes each.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons have been lodged for presentation:

#### **Beekeeping Industry**

Petition calling on the Government to support amateur beekeepers by abandoning hive registration fees and allocating more resources to assist amateur and commercial apiarists to maintain a disease-free and sustainable hive network, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

#### **Climate Change Legislation**

Petition requesting the introduction of a Climate Change Act which would mandate renewable energy sources, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following petition signed by more than 500 persons has been lodged for presentation:

#### **Inner West Light Rail**

Petition requesting the purchase of new light rail vehicles and other measures to improve frequency, reliability and safety on the Inner West Light Rail, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

#### *Bills*

### **ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (CASH DONATIONS) BILL 2019**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (15:25:03):** In an earlier term of Parliament, when election funding laws emerged as an issue, former Premier Mike Baird took decisive action to close loopholes by strengthening penalty provisions and to ensure that this Parliament took a stand in favour of transparency, people being accountable for donations and integrity of the system. At that time, that was the response of a Liberal-Nationals Government to the exposure of illegal political donations, notwithstanding that the members to whom I referred earlier in the debate had no findings made against them by the independent ICAC and were guilty of nothing. Be that as it may, there was a strong response to systemic issues that emerged and they were addressed by former Premier Mike Baird and his Government.

Fast forward to today and ICAC is examining another loophole that has emerged because of practices adopted by Labor members of Parliament. The political donations became public knowledge in August 2019, but the events date from 2015 immediately after the State election. The funds raised at that time by the Labor Party were used in the most recent 2019 State election. Members of the Labor Opposition benefited from those funds. They are the beneficiaries of improper practice, yet they occupy seats in this House. Despite the questionable nature of how those funds were raised, some of them are frontbench members of the Opposition. The funds were raised by Labor collectively, and Kaila Murnain gave testimony to ICAC. I do not know who else was involved, but no doubt ICAC will sort that out. Individual donations were made to a particular member in cash.

The issue being debated today is the practice of donating in cash so the true identity of the donor can be disguised. That is not an accidental practice, nor is it a slip-up, a mistake or an error of judgement: rather, it is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the system. Moreover, it could be undertaken only by someone who has that intent. That is why an Aldi bag full of \$100,000 in cash was delivered to Labor Party headquarters. It was not because of some accidental oversight: It was a deliberate intent to disguise where that \$100,000 came from. While the legislative change effected by this bill will be small, it will be critical to restoring the integrity of the electoral funding and disclosure system because it will ensure that those who donate can be identified. The new legislation will ensure that donors are entitled to donate, they are not prohibited donors and they are not exceeding the cap.

If there is some type of political interest underlying a donation, it will be exposed to daylight. If a donor has a particular type of business and makes a political donation, people will be able to draw their own inferences. But as long as the donor abides by the law, discloses the donation and remains within the cap, the system will operate as intended. By introducing this legislation, the Government is seeking to ensure that the whole system rests on the certainty of transparency. Let in the sunlight on the system of political donations. Let people know who is really making the donations, that the donation is within the law and that it is only as much as the donor is entitled to donate.

Compliance with the new legislation will be essential if we are to stop one party or one interested actor from exerting disproportionate influence over the policies of a political party. If someone can get away with donating \$100,000 in secrecy, who knows what influence they have over that political party and its policies? What did they ask in return for the \$100,000 donation in that Aldi bag? To my knowledge, that has not been revealed through the ICAC process, but it is a fair question for the community to know the answer to. What did the donor want? Did they get it? I hope the ICAC process can answer those questions because they go to the heart of what we are debating should apply in an electoral funding and disclosure system.

We need to ensure that politicians, our decision-makers, act in the public interest, not in the private interest of a donor. This legislation is a further step towards creating a level playing field, with donation caps and transparency around donations, and a proper process of recording and identifying donations and donors. When the bill is passed we will be able to shut out undue and disproportionate influence of a donor who secretly wants to wield power over decisions made by Parliament. This bill will enable people to see who is making decisions, how decisions are made and why they are made. At election time it will give people a fair chance to judge whether they approve of policies and decision-making or whether they prefer to make a change.

It is critical to give the public the power to make that informed choice by building defences into the system to protect against corrupting influences that would deny the public a fair and fully informed say on who will represent them and the decisions those representatives will make. In conclusion I state that Government members found out in August about the \$100,000 political donation, but clearly members of the Labor Opposition knew exactly what was going on for much longer, or at least they had heard some of it, but said nothing. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:30:56):** My contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019 will be brief. At the outset I state that Labor will support this legislation, which will increase transparency and confidence in the political donations system in our State, which is very much needed, by ensuring political donations can be properly traced to their true source. But as good as the bill is, there is still so much more to be done to improve the integrity of our political system in this great State. That is precisely why last week the Leader of the Opposition introduced legislation to ban property developers

from sitting in Cabinet. The revelations about the member for Drummoyne, Mr John Sidoti, operating as a Minister by day and a property developer by night have been nothing short of outrageous. It is clear that his position in Cabinet is untenable.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Point of order: I am not a developer in any shape or form.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the first time. The member for Drummoyne will resume his seat. The member for Campbelltown has the call.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The revelations about the member for Drummoyne, Mr John Sidoti, acting as a Minister by day and a property developer by night have been nothing short of outrageous.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Point of order—

**Mr GREG WARREN:** It is clear that his position in Cabinet is untenable.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Campbelltown will resume his seat. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr John Sidoti:** The member for Campbelltown is using parliamentary privilege to make false allegations.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member for Drummoyne will resume his seat.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** It is clear that the position of the member of Drummoyne in Cabinet is completely untenable. I call on all members of this House to support Labor's bill, just as Labor is supporting this bill introduced by the Government. But on the topic of donations, which is what we are discussing during debate on this bill, in the 2018-2019 financial year apparently and allegedly Mr Sidoti donated thousands of dollars to the New South Wales Liberal Party. That is a matter of public record. While it is not uncommon for members of Parliament to donate to their parties, there is allegedly one key difference in Mr Sidoti's case.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: Any personal attack on a member should be made by substantive motion. Obviously this is an attack. The debate is becoming heated.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Drummoyne that he already is on one call to order.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** I reiterate that any personal attack should be made by substantive motion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Lane Cove for his point of order. The member for Campbelltown is referring to allegations that are a matter of public record. However, I draw the member for Campbelltown back to the leave of the bill. The member for Campbelltown has the call.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** As we know, it is not uncommon for members of Parliament to donate to their parties. But there is a key difference in this case: It is illegal for John Sidoti to make donations because he is a property developer.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Point of order: I am not a property owner.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member must state his point of order.

**Mr John Sidoti:** The member is misleading the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Are members allowed to lie in this House?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member will not argue with a ruling of the Chair. The member will resume his seat. I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the second time.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Section 53 of the Electoral Funding Act provides a definition of "property developer" for the purpose of deciding who is a prohibited donor in New South Wales. It states:

- (1) Each of the following persons is a *property developer* for the purposes of this Division:
  - (a) an individual or a corporation if:

- (i) the individual or a corporation carries on a business mainly concerned with the residential or commercial development of land, with the ultimate purpose of the sale or lease of the land for profit, and
- (ii) in the course of that business:
  - (A) 1 relevant planning application has been made by or on behalf of the individual or corporation and is pending, or
  - (B) 3 or more relevant planning applications made by or on behalf of the individual or corporation have been determined within the preceding 7 years,
- (b) a person who is a close associate of an individual or a corporation referred to in paragraph (a).

There are many different ways in which a person could be considered a "close associate" under the Act. Section 53 states that the term "close associate" includes:

... a person in a joint venture or partnership with the property developer in connection with a relevant planning application made by or on behalf of the property developer who is likely to obtain a financial gain if development that would be or is authorised by the application is authorised or carried out.

We all know the details of the extensive property portfolio of the member in question and the enormous amount of money he is set to make as a result of a decision made by this Government about the location of the future metro stations at Five Dock and the existing Tallawong metro station in Rouse Hill.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73, which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

That is obviously what is happening at the moment. I ask the Deputy Speaker to draw the member for Campbelltown back to the leave of the bill.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I again ask the member for Campbelltown to return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I accept and thank you for your ruling. But let me be very clear: Those opposite have sat in this Chamber during the debate on this bill for weeks and have thrown stones about Aldi bags, named people who do not even work in this Parliament and alleged criminal conduct on the part of the Labor Party, including the Leader of the Opposition and many members on this side of the House. For Government members to stand up, throw stones and then say we are imputing improper motives: Are you fair dinkum? You have sat over there for weeks, slapping into us time and again for the purpose of political gain.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Campbelltown will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. Once again, it states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order. In the last part of the member for Campbelltown's contribution he was criticising Government members' comments. Once again I draw the member for Campbelltown to the leave of the bill and ask him to direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** If I can just continue, the issue is that individuals outside of this House have the ability to present themselves to this House if they feel that they have been maligned or mistreated. The member for Campbelltown is clearly attacking another member of this House. Standing Order 73 comes into play. There is no reference to members making comments about people outside of this place. Members making imputations about outside individuals is not covered by Standing Order 73.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order. You are clarifying Standing Order 73 because the member for Campbelltown mentioned people outside of the House. I thank the Minister for that clarification. I am sure the member for Campbelltown will take heed of that.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I appreciate the Minister's clarification and the Deputy Speaker's subsequent ruling. But the member in question has a 10 per cent stake in the land at Cudgegong Road at Rouse Hill, which is being developed into a multimillion-dollar high-rise apartment tower by the property development company Southern Han.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for North Shore will cease interjecting.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** The member in question is clearly a prohibited donor under the Act, as outlined. In light of that, the New South Wales Liberal Party must immediately forfeit the money that the member in

question donated in the 2018-2019 financial year and any extra money that has been donated since that time. The Opposition calls on the Premier and the Liberal Party to take action on this matter. I call on the New South Wales Liberal Party to immediately forfeit the dirty donations it took from those in question and give that money to people affected by the matters gripping our State.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for North Shore to order for the first time.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** In conclusion, when you draw the lines around a playing field at a football park you need to be prepared to play within them. For weeks and weeks the mob on the other side of the House has denigrated the Opposition, questioned our creditability and drawn correlations to convicted felons and convicted criminals. Now they have the audacity to take exception when we stand up and put a few facts on the table. Government members need to harden up. If they throw stones, they will come back at them. When they fire a shot they need to make sure they take us out, because they are not going to like what comes back. [*Time expired.*]

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Newcastle will cease interjecting. The member for North Shore will cease interjecting.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:41:31):** I speak on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already provides a strong framework for political donations in New South Wales. In fact, the objects of the Act, laid out in section 3 of the Act, are as follows:

- (a) to establish a fair and transparent electoral funding, expenditure and disclosure scheme,
- (b) to facilitate public awareness of political donations,
- (c) to help prevent corruption and undue influence in the government of the State or in local government,

...

However, the ICAC has dealt with a series of events that has shocked many in this State. There have been bags filled with cash going in the door at Sussex Street, slush funds and straw donors. The people of New South Wales deserve better when it comes to the actions of their political participants. The member for Wyong said, "People should be outraged". And we are. The bill will assist the Labor Party to be more transparent to the people of this State. The bill will deal directly with the issues raised by the ICAC and ban political donations made in cash. The member for Wyong also said that people are always trying to get around the rules. Not everyone tries to get around the rules, but clearly some members of the Labor Party excel in that field.

This reform is an Australian first. It puts New South Wales at the forefront of transparency and integrity in political participation in this country and the democratic world. This Government will not take a backward step when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political processes. It is time to restore the community's faith in our political processes. We hoped that the behaviour of Labor during its 16 years in government that led this State into the mire would not be repeated. Unfortunately, it is clear from recent ICAC hearings that the Labor Party has not changed.

This change will make it easier to trace and account for significant political donations, removing potential opportunities to disguise their true source. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already establishes a rigorous framework for political donations, which includes donation caps, disclosure requirements and prohibited donor provisions. For example, the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported. The Act also prohibits donations from property developers and the tobacco, liquor or gambling industries. This reform will strengthen the ability of the Electoral Commission to identify potential contraventions of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act.

Subject to the existing caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions, it will still be possible to make and accept political donations that exceed \$100 using alternative payment methods. It is only cash donations, which cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for, that exceed \$100 that will be banned. The \$100 threshold has been carefully considered to strike the right balance between ensuring that political donations are traceable and avoiding an unreasonable administrative burden on parties, candidates and donors. The \$100 limit allows for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event.

The prohibition will not affect the application of existing provisions in the Act, which ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements. A contravention of the proposed prohibition of cash donations of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act, which carries a maximum penalty of \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years, or both. These penalties are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting a donation from a property developer. The anti-avoidance

provision at section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (15:46:46):** It would be remiss of me today, as the member for Newcastle who got into this hallowed establishment on the back of a by-election through ICAC sweeping through the Hunter and sweeping out the Liberal Party members as it went, to not support the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019, which prohibits the making or accepting of political donations in cash that exceed \$100. I came in on the back end of Operation Spicer and the revelations that came out of that. It was through that inquiry that we heard from the former mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy, who ended up calling himself the "walking ATM" because of the amount of cash that he distributed to sitting members in the Hunter in big wads of up to \$10,000 in brown paper bags. Who could not remember the incredible revelations of the mayor in his Bentley coming to the veterinary clinic of the member for Charlestown, getting the vet off the dog, the vet walking out, getting into the back of the Bentley and receiving a \$10,000 wad of cash in a brown paper bag? It is all there in the ICAC transcripts, in fact. Who could forget that story and many others?

In Operation Spicer, ICAC investigated allegations in the lead-up to the 2011 State election that certain New South Wales Liberal Party candidates and others solicited and received political donations that were not declared as required by the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981. It was alleged that those political donations were made by and received from prohibited donors—property developers—and some exceeded the applicable caps on political donations. The commission also examined whether, in the lead-up to the 2011 State election, members or associates of the Liberal Party used or attempted to use the Free Enterprise Foundation as a means of disguising the true identity of donors and evading the prohibition on receiving political donations from property developers.

Having had so much trouble up our way in the past, I am one who welcomes the bill. Operation Spicer and the investigation into the New South Wales Liberal Party electoral funding of the 2011 State election campaign found that the following members acted with the intention of evading laws under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act relating to the disclosure of political donations and the ban on donations from property developers: Chris Hartcher, Christopher Spence, Timothy Owen, Michael Gallacher, Garry Edwards, Andrew Cornwell—

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: Unless the member is going to be fully frank and open in what the actual findings were, I suggest he be very careful. Those individuals were never charged and to this day we are still awaiting clarification on some of those issues, so there is a citizen's right of reply—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** What is the Minister's point of order?

**Mr John Sidoti:** Misleading the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Drummoyne that I need to hear what the Minister's point of order is.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** It is Standing Order 73.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That refers to reflections on members of either House, which I think you highlighted to us previously.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** I know I highlighted it before, but they are former members of this House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The standing order says clearly, "reflections on members of either House", but I am sure the member for Newcastle has taken your point.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** Yes. I will go to the findings of fact of ICAC then, shall I? That is probably a better place to go. The commission's findings include that Raymond Carter, Andrew Cornwell, Garry Edwards, the Hon Michael Gallacher, MLC, Nabil Gazal Jnr, Nicholas Gazal, Hilton Grugeon, Christopher Hartcher, Timothy Koelma, Jeffrey McCloy, Timothy Owen, Christopher Spence, Hugh Thomson and Darren Williams acted with the intention of evading laws under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act relating to the disclosure of political donations and the ban on donations from property developers. They were its findings, I believe, and Messrs Grugeon, Hartcher, Koelma, McCloy, Owen, Thomson and Williams were also found to have acted with the intention of evading the election funding laws relating to caps on political donations.

The commission also found that Baumann, Di Girolamo, Troy Palmer and Darren Webber acted with the intention of evading the election funding laws relating to the disclosure of political donations and that Bart Bassett knowingly solicited a political donation from a property developer. They are the ICAC findings of fact. I commend and support the bill. I think it is a wonderful thing that we will have a prohibition on the making or accepting of political donations in cash that exceed \$100.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:52:30):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. I thank the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, for introducing this legislation in the other place and I thank him for introducing a piece of legislation that is a first in Australia. This bill will put New South Wales at the forefront of transparency and integrity for political participation within our nation. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash over \$100. Specifically, it inserts section 50A, after section 50 of the Act, and the additions read:

(1) It is unlawful for a person to make a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100.

(2) It is unlawful for a person to accept a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100. Any contravention of the proposed prohibition would carry a maximum penalty of 400 penalty units or \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years or both. These are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting donations from property developers, or people engaged in the tobacco, liquor or gambling industries. The anti-avoidance provision at section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements.

While the Electoral Funding Act 2018 already provides a strong regulatory framework in relation to the making and receiving of political donations in New South Wales, this bill seeks to strengthen that framework through making it illegal to make or accept political donations, in cash, over \$100. Importantly, the amendments in the bill will assist in making it easier for authorities to trace and make account of donations, should it be required. That will help to create a clearer and more transparent system and ensure that those who say that they are donating funds are really the people doing so.

We are all aware of why this amendment is being put into place—it is due to the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry known as Operation Aero. That investigation is looking into the allegations concerning political donations, the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party [ALP] and other parties. ICAC public hearings commenced on 26 August 2019 and the media has made allegations that approximately \$100,000 in cash was given to the New South Wales ALP headquarters in 2015 by a property developer. It is alleged that the \$100,000 cash donation was disclosed to the NSW Electoral Commission as separate cash donations split across multiple different donors.

There is already a rigorous structure for political donations in New South Wales through the Electoral Funding Act 2018, which provides for disclosure requirements, prohibited donor provisions and donation caps. The Act has sought to do this by prohibiting donations from property developers and tobacco, liquor or gambling industries. Additionally, the Act ensures that all political donations over \$1,000 are required to be reported and that political donations to registered parties are capped at \$6,400 a year.

The amendments in the bill seek to ensure that the structure is strengthened by requiring that donations of cash over \$100 are reported to create a system that is able to be tracked more closely and is more transparent. The amendments in the bill will assist the NSW Electoral Commission with identifying potential contraventions of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act. Through reporting donations in cash over \$100 it will now be harder to hide the source of a significant political donation. It will greatly assist in improving the traceability and transparency of donations. Importantly, it will help to promote compliance with the legislative structure for political donations while also improving the integrity of the electoral system more broadly.

It should be noted that the Government has recognised that the limit should be \$100 to allow for situations when a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event. Multiple donations from the same source are still to be aggregated for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements, which the prohibition does not affect. The current aggregation provisions will continue to apply to cash donations, subject to the existing exemption in section 57 of the Act for certain small donations of \$50 or less.

I again thank the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, and his staff for the work they have done to bring this comprehensive, thorough bill to the Parliament so quickly after those allegations were made at the ICAC. Once the situation became known, the Government acted incredibly swiftly to make sure that situations like this could not occur again. As I said previously, this bill will put New South Wales at the forefront of transparency and integrity for political participation within our nation. It shows that this Government will not take a backward step when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political processes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (15:58:21):** I speak in debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. "Transparency" must be a new word for members of the Liberal Party. I think they

will have to look it up in the dictionary. I will set aside the \$600,000 worth of donations that the Liberal Party had to give back in the 2011 election and turn instead to the 2015 campaign. The Liberal candidate for Auburn, Ronney Oueik, and the member for East Hills were just two of the candidates who did not have a campaign account. Do not worry about what people were doing with donations and how they were processing them; who knows what those people were spending and where the money was coming from. There are no records, because they had absolutely no campaign accounts.

I kept a record of the expenditure in East Hills and how far over it went. I submitted that to the Electoral Commissioner. We know that the Electoral Commissioner charged 16 members of Parliament with offences under the Act during the 2015 campaign, but we do not know who they are. The Government will not tell us; it will not change the legislation so that we can find out. The Government will not tell us what Glenn Brookes did in that campaign. You have a real hide attacking members on this side of the Chamber, given what happened in that campaign.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: I can probably assist by telling the member what Glenn Brookes did in that campaign: He won it. And he won the next one and he won the one before it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The member for Auburn has the call. She will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** I will. It is amazing; the Minister seems to have been asleep in question time because he constantly takes those types of points of order. He must have missed previous rulings by the Speaker in regard to what constitutes a point of order under Standing Order 73. The reality is what members on his side of the Chamber did in the 2015 campaign, particularly in the East Hills electorate, was a disgrace. Defacing the posters of a member of Parliament by putting stickers on them and calling him a paedophile was an outright disgrace, but members opposite have the hide to come into this Chamber and carry on about these donations. They did not even have campaign accounts in the 2015 campaign, so they should not talk to us about transparency and corruption. They have their own corruption issues to deal with. In the 2011 campaign they had to give back \$600,000 in donations. They had no campaign accounts and they put stickers on posters calling the Labor candidate in East Hills a paedophile. What they did during that campaign was outrageous.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Who did?

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** You sit there and say, "Who did?" You know exactly who did it. You know why, because your people ended up in the courts over it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** That shows the calibre of the people on the other side of the Chamber. The Minister is asking, "Who did it?" He told us that he worked on the East Hills campaign. He must have had his eyes closed. I had to go around on the Friday morning before the election and pull down every single Labor Party poster because of the actions of the Liberal Party and what its members did to our campaign. It was completely outrageous and an offence against the Electoral Commission. If the Minister wants to know who did what, he can ask the Electoral Commissioner to release the names of the 16 members of Parliament who had charges laid against them under the Electoral Act after the 2015 campaign. Members opposite carry on as if they have done nothing wrong on any occasion. All their members have been hauled before ICAC. Daryl Maguire just appeared before the commission, but they pretend nothing has happened.

Not one of the members sitting opposite has ever apologised for the actions of their party in that campaign in 2015. It was a disgrace. They have no respect for the democratic process. I do not care if they change the Act to require a cap of \$100 on cash donations because in Auburn people will not be donating more than \$100. The electorate of Auburn has the second highest homelessness rate and the second highest unemployment rate and people do not have a lot of money. So Labor members do not worry about those kinds of things. All our declarations are on the website, unlike the declarations of those opposite. If you try to find a Liberal Party member who makes a declaration on what he or she took in donations on the website you will not find one.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:03:23):** I support the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already provides a strong framework for recording political donations in New South Wales. In recent times we have seen a series of events at the Independent Commission Against Corruption that have demonstrated to the people of this State the appalling behaviour of party officials from the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party. We are all familiar with the Aldi bag filled with cash that were walked through the front door at Sussex Street. Who knows how many other Aldi bags have gone to other locations that we are not aware of. The voters of New South Wales deserve better when it comes to the actions of their political participants. I will refer to a document that has come to me via my special

investigations unit and was signed by none other than the then Leader of the Opposition and former member for Blacktown, John Robertson, in February 2013 titled *A New Standard*. To quote the former Opposition leader:

NSW deserves honest, transparent and accountable Government.

In particular, citizens have a right to expect that MPs and Ministers will behave ethically and put the community's interests ahead of their own.

He further stated:

I am determined to set a new Labor standard. That's why I am putting forward a clear plan to reform both the Labor Party and State Government to lift standards of accountability and transparency.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** What date was that?

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH:** That was February 2013. The proposed amendments in the bill will deal directly with some of the issues raised at the ICAC. It will emphatically ban political donations made in cash over \$100. This has the added advantage of saving on plastic as there will not be so many bags used for the transport of cash inside Sussex Street. This reform is an Australian first and ensures that New South Wales is leading the way to improve the transparency and integrity of the political process in this country. This Government will be positive and effective when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political processes. During the 16 years of hard Labor rule in this State a culture of "whatever it takes" was perpetuated through the ranks of the Australian Labor Party [ALP] from top to bottom. I refer again to the document, which states:

The overwhelming majority of Labor Party members are ethical, principled people motivated by a genuine desire to improve the lives of the people around them and deliver a more fair and equitable Australia. In the name of these Labor members we must send a clear message that corruption will not be tolerated. Any person who is found to have engaged in corrupt conduct will be expelled from the Labor Party on the grounds that their conduct is contrary to the principles and solidarity of Labor and they are unworthy of carrying the card of our great party.

This zero-tolerance approach to corruption will be enforced immediately.

This document was penned in 2013, and in 2015 a bag of cash was delivered into Sussex Street. It is clear from recent hearings at the ICAC that the ALP has not changed. Those opposite have demonstrated that they are still in the business of "whatever it takes". Principles are put aside and rule books are thrown away, especially the rule of law. Returning to the bill, the Electoral Funding Act 2018 will make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds \$100. This will ensure that it will be a crime to carry cash in an Aldi bag, or even an IGA bag, which is intended to be used to induce political influence.

This change will ensure that there is accountability in all donations, thus removing potential opportunities to deceive voters as to the source of donations and the purpose for which they were made. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already has a stringent framework for political donations with donations caps, disclosure requirements and prohibited donor provisions. It is important that the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported. The Act also prohibits donations from property developers and the tobacco, liquor and gambling industries.

This reform gives the Electoral Commission the ability to identify potential rorts of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act. It will still be possible to make and accept political donations which exceed \$100 using alternative payment methods. It is only cash donations, in plastic bags or even brown paper bags, which cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for and that exceed \$100 which will be banned. The limit of \$100 is a reasonable one and it strikes the right balance between ensuring that political donations are traceable while preventing the imposition of an unreasonable administrative burden on political parties, candidates and legitimate donors. The limit allows for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be possible. The inevitable buying of raffle tickets at a fundraising event will not be impacted.

Even the raffles of the type conducted by the late Johnno Johnson—may he rest in peace—will survive. The prohibition will not impact on the existing provisions in the Act that ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated together for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements. A cash donation of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act. This will carry a maximum penalty of \$44,000, or imprisonment for two years, or both. The penalties will now be consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations. The anti-avoidance provision at section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (16:10:15):** The Opposition does not oppose the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019 and neither do I. The bill amends the Election Funding Act 2018 simply by amending section 50A of the principal Act. There is no issue with that. The issue I have is that the bill has not been introduced as a result of a genuine desire for reform of election funding. It has not been done in consultation.

The 2018 Act was enacted after extensive consultation. This amendment is the result of a smart alec response to evidence led before the Independent Commission Against Corruption in relation to a cash donation made to the Labor Party.

If the Government is not genuine and it enacts a law—even if it is a good law—for a media headline or to have some fun at the Opposition's expense, it must ask itself whether it is worth it when its own members are attacked and its records and failures are exposed before the Independent Commission Against Corruption. There may be situations of unfair exposure, such as happened with Mike Gallacher, whose evidence I led before the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption only a few weeks ago. Does his name again have to be raised in the House? He has already been unfairly dealt with because of a Government bill introduced simply to try to embarrass the Opposition and get a headline. All that happens during the debate is that names come up from our side of the House and the Government's side and it brings the entire political process into disrepute. A proper government would wait for a report and recommendations from the current committee inquiry to decide whether a change to this law will have any effect on those people who are corrupt and want to evade the law. The process must include consultation.

The bill contains a small amendment aimed at sticking it to the Labor Party to show how bad it is. The reality is that members opposite copped it in the House this morning and they asked for it. That is not how governments or this House are supposed to operate. That is not how the adversarial system is supposed to operate in terms of public policy, particularly with an issue such as donations. Every single democratic country in the world struggles with campaign donations, and has done so for decades. No democracy has satisfactorily solved the issue. Money is required to participate in a democracy and money has to be raised. The age-old solution to campaign donations has always been transparency and declaration. It is the same in this State, this nation, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Europe, Indonesia and Japan. It does not matter what country you are in, as soon as you start putting tight restrictions on campaign donations the money needed by political parties will go underground.

There is a need for control of campaign donations. People have to know who donates, otherwise the influence and decisions of elected people and governments can be bought. There has to be transparency. There have to be caps so that people cannot buy an election. There have to be caps so that third-party campaigners who have unlimited money, like Clive Palmer, cannot influence elections. There needs to be control. The High Court has recognised that in a number of decisions to enable freedom of political expression and communication. There need to be rules, laws and controls. However, at the same time the political parties have to recognise their own failures.

All members of this House—and, I imagine, those in the other place—are under pressure during our entire parliamentary term to raise money, whether or not we are given actual targets. I know those on the other side are given targets; those on this side are not necessarily given targets but there are expectations on us to raise money. Some of the political parties put so much pressure on MPs that they fear for their preselection if they are unable to raise funds. Nobody is blameless in this process.

I think what is needed in this country is a national examination of campaign donations and national laws that apply to every democracy that operates. I understand that different caps might apply, say, between local government and the State and different caps may apply to Federal laws. But there is something fundamentally wrong when you enact a law that creates someone as a prohibited donor but then when you say, "Why is this person a prohibited donor?" you scratch your head. A cleaner for British American Tobacco cannot buy a \$10 raffle ticket in a political campaign because he is associated with a tobacco company. The purpose of the law is not to stop that person from donating \$10; it is to stop the tobacco company from influencing policy by donating money. Nobody had even thought through the 2018 Act, when there had been detailed consultation.

When the Labor Government enacted the prohibited donor reforms in, I think, about 2008 or 2009, I remember being told by a very senior public servant that we needed to be very careful with the reforms that we implemented, otherwise it would send money underground. We need to be genuine in this approach. For every single trip-wire that we place in the legislation, somebody on one side of the House is going to fall over it. If somebody donates to a particular campaign and they sign a document to say that they are not a prohibited donor, their certification is relied on. How does anyone know that the person is not a prohibited donor? For example, even if the person is a barrister, it is not known whether he trips the three development applications in two years wire in some other activity. We do not know what his other activity is; we are relying on the certification. If an error occurs and it comes to light, the money might have to be refunded. But you can bet your bottom dollar that somebody on the opposite side of the House will try to take political advantage of it—until the same error happens to a member on their side of the Chamber.

In trying to take some political advantage of the Labor Party's discomfort with this bit of legislation, all the Government has actually done is again bring the entire political process into disrepute. All people will hear

is the Coalition Government attacking Labor and Labor attacking the Coalition Government. The names of the same people who either fairly or unfairly have been caught in the process will be brought out again and people will regard their elected representatives with contempt. I suggest that the Coalition might like to look at its primary numbers, at our primary numbers and at how many people are on the crossbench and ask itself why those members are there. Why are there so many members of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and The Greens here while the primary votes of the major political parties are effectively in the sewer? The Government should then look at the debate on the bill; that will give it the answer.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:20:05):** I disagree with the member for Heffron's statements that the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019 is not a genuine reform. This is a very genuine reform that will have a very genuine outcome. This business that has been going on with ICAC in the last couple of months has actually affected me. On the day the story broke my wife told me to head into Aldi and pick up some groceries on the way home. I remember thinking I could not get a bag because people might photograph me with it! I had to carry all the groceries out to the car in my hands. It was terrible.

The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already provides a strong framework for political donations in New South Wales. However, at ICAC we have seen a series of events straight out of a spy novel. You could not make it up. The most creative writers in the country could not come up with bags full of cash walking out the front door at Sussex Street, secret meetings down on Hospital Road, slush funds, straw donors—it has really opened my eyes to the sleaziness that there can be in this place. A few members from both sides of the Chamber have echoed today that the people of New South Wales deserve better when it comes to the actions of our political participants.

The bill will deal directly with the issues raised at ICAC—namely, it will ban political donations made in cash over \$100. This reform is an Australian first. It puts New South Wales and the Liberal-Nationals Government at the forefront of transparency and integrity for political participation in the country and in the democratic world. This Government will not take a backwards step when it comes to ensuring integrity and probity in our political process. Sixteen years of hard Labor that led this State down the garden path should not and hopefully will not ever be repeated. Unfortunately, it is clear from recent hearings at ICAC that the Australian Labor Party [ALP] has not changed. The ALP has demonstrated that it is still in the business of sleaze and corruption.

Specifically, the bill amends five lines of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to make it unlawful for a person to accept or give a political donation in cash of over \$100. This change makes it easier to trace and account for significant political donations and it removes potential opportunities to disguise their true source. I note the member for Heffron said that you cannot regulate sometimes because people will find a way around those regulations or around those laws. However, that is the same with every single law that we pass in this place. We put up roadblocks to ensure a fair and just society, and people find their way around them.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** That's why we've got penalties.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** That is why we have penalties and laws in place, exactly. I thank the member for Lane Cove.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** And lawyers.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** Yes, and lawyers. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already establishes a rigorous framework for political donations, which includes donations caps, disclosure requirements and prohibited donor provisions. For example, the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported. The Act also prohibits donations from property developers and tobacco, liquor and gambling industries. This reform will strengthen the ability of the NSW Electoral Commission to identify potential contraventions of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act. Subject to the existing caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions, it will still be possible to make and accept political donations which exceed \$100 using alternative payment methods. There are myriad different methods that exist. We still have cheques flying around the place. It is only cash donations that exceed \$100, which cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for, that will be banned.

This \$100 threshold has been carefully considered to strike the right balance to ensure that political donations are traceable while avoiding an unreasonable administrative burden on parties, candidates and donors. The \$100 limit allows for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as when buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event or paying for a lunch or barbecue. The prohibition will not affect the application of existing provisions in the Act, which ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated together for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements.

A contravention of the proposed prohibition of cash donations of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act, which carries a maximum penalty of \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years, or, hopefully, both. These penalties are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting a donation from a property developer. The anti-avoidance provision of section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements.

As our society continues to evolve in general, the use of cash has dropped. People pay not only with credit cards but also with tap-and-go on watches and phones. In a couple of years' time there will probably be implantable devices that people can pay with. The member for Heffron mentioned that we have introduced the bill to poke fun at the Labor Party. I disagree in the strongest terms. This is a serious piece of reform. This will bring fairness into the political process. The member asked whether this will have an effect. It will stop donations of \$100,000 that were mentioned in the ICAC hearings. That will bring a lot of fairness into our political process. This might not be the last reform that comes out of these hearings but it is a good first step and it is something that we can initiate straight away. We do not have to wait for the ICAC hearings to conclude, because who knows how long that will be? Every week they continue, more revelations come out. I believe this is a good amendment and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:26:16):** On behalf of The Greens I address the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. We think the bill is a good step forward. It is positive recognition of an issue that has been raised as a result of Operation Aero. It is something we need to recognise is important in order to continue to strengthen the electoral funding arrangements in New South Wales. As members know, this issue has been ventilated exhaustively in the ICAC hearings concerning Operation Aero, examining allegations regarding the Labor Party. As members also know from Operation Spicer and other matters, parties in this place are not immune from seeking to evade electoral laws and act in ways which are contrary to the law.

The Act strengthens the ability of the Electoral Commission to identify potential contraventions of the disclosure of requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act. However, one of the big issues here—as those of us who looked at the budget estimates hearings transcripts know—is the Electoral Commission is desperate for funding. The Electoral Commission needs to be adequately funded. We can move all the legislation we want in this place and give the Electoral Commission increased powers of investigation and compliance because without adequate funding it is unable to fulfil that role.

As we also heard from the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the latest funding amount is barely sufficient to fund its ongoing operations. The efficiency dividend is basically a cut that the Government introduces to departments. The Police Integrity Commission, the Ombudsman, the Electoral Commission and a range of different oversight bodies in New South Wales need to have funding in order to adequately continue their processes. It would be worthwhile for the Minister to identify whether or not there will be any additional funding allocated to the Electoral Commission in order for it to undertake the additional responsibilities granted to it as a result of this legislation.

I note the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has been meeting and I draw members' attention to the range of measures that The Greens have promoted in order to improve and reduce the risk of corruption in New South Wales. That involves reducing the total amount of caps that are applicable in New South Wales to reduce the amount of money so that elections are a contest of ideas rather than a contest of cash. We think there is a range of opportunities to cap individual membership fees so we do not see significant membership fees as a way to avoid campaign contributions. We also think that campaign spending by for-profit corporations and other business entities should not be part of our democratic process because of the large amount of money they can bring to bear.

The other issue that is important to address when looking at the bill, which is about providing a robust regulatory framework when it comes to political donations, is making sure it is addressed at a Federal level. This is the big hole in the system. We can say we ban political donors here in New South Wales but the Federal party can get rivers of gold from developers who can help influence preselections in councils and other areas, and that is a key issue. All politics aside, here in New South Wales our system is amongst the best in Australia in many areas—of course, a lot of areas need to be improved and there are some significant problems, but the Federal system is unbelievably bad. The Federal system is incredibly opaque—it is incredibly difficult to get a handle on who is making political donations. Recently people have used crowdfunding websites to mask political donors.

I encourage the Minister to work with his Federal and State counterparts to ensure that they implement some robust changes federally. It is incredibly difficult to convince Federal governments to change the electoral donation arrangements. What is the key reason we did this here? Because there was an explosion after ICAC uncovered a range of "irregularities", one could say, in the governing party. They had to act, and they did so. To their credit, they took some significant steps. Without a Federal ICAC, that will never happen federally. There is

no reason to assume that the corruption we have seen in our political system ends at the border of New South Wales. It is clear that it exists in other States as well. Whether it is the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission in Victoria or bodies in other jurisdictions, their crime fighting and anti-corruption bodies—I emphasise anti-corruption—do not have the same powers that ICAC has in New South Wales. That means that corruption can go undiscovered.

The anti-corruption provisions federally are a joke and an embarrassment. I encourage the Minister to do his absolute best and utmost to encourage the Federal Government to change the way political donations are dealt with federally. While that system is still there, pressures such as tobacco, alcohol, developers and huge donations lacking in transparency will continue to infect and rock the core of our democracy. People are coming to realise there is a pay-per-view process, where access to Ministers is paid for and if you are Mr Bloggs from the community organisation down the road and you cannot afford \$5,000 to see the Minister at a business dinner, you do not get access.

In Queensland the former Labor Premier banned paying for meetings with Ministers. Under the current Queensland administration it is creeping back. The former Premier of Queensland did the right thing and we should do the same thing in New South Wales so Ministers do not have the pressure to turn up to these gigs where people have paid thousands of dollars in order to lobby, gain access and influence them. It will be a relief for the Ministers, and quite frankly it would be something which would mark New South Wales as a leader in the anti-corruption area. Ministers would not have to be concerned with fronting up and listening to these rent-seekers and lobbyists in disguise.

The final point I make is that there has been a lot of Labor bashing. In politics having clean hands is often very difficult, but this is a step forward. Obviously, compliance for political parties is an enormous issue. In the past five or six years there has been a revolution in the amount of compliance that political parties have to undertake. I understand it is a challenge for all parties. For the smaller parties, like The Greens in particular, it is a big challenge. We want to make sure that parties are supported in the compliance processes and in the funding of compliance.

We hope that is something which is examined when we look at how we fund the Electoral Commission in its work to make sure that its training and compliance department assists all political parties to meet the heightened regulatory standards that have now been set. Education is really critical. One of the things I believe in is not just changing laws and then doing a gotcha. As the Independent Commission Against Corruption does, education has to be a key part of what the organisation does. The Electoral Commission needs that funding to train political parties, donors and third parties in order to improve the situation. As I mentioned, The Greens think this a positive contribution and we will not be opposing the bill.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:34:47):** I make a short contribution to the Electoral Funding Amendment (Cash Donations) Bill 2019. I note a whole bunch has been said by members on both sides of this House in relation to the bill, which is a very small piece of work—a mere three clauses. The first clause sets out the name of the Act, the second clause sets out the commencement date and the third clause is a simple and small amendment to the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to insert a new section 50A, which will make it unlawful for a person to make a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100 and make it unlawful for a person to accept a political donation in cash that exceeds the value of \$100.

Insofar as this small amendment to the Electoral Funding Act will improve the behaviour of participants overall, I note Labor will not oppose the bill, and I welcome it but I need to address some of the points that have been made. Members from both sides of the House have used this debate to comment adversely on the behaviour of their opponents. We should welcome the bill as an opportunity to improve the behaviour of participants in the political process. However, many members on the other side of the House have referred to Labor's current discomfort before the Independent Commission Against Corruption in relation to an alleged \$100,000 cash donation that is currently being investigated by that organisation.

Of course, none of those opposite want to talk about the \$600,000 unlawful donation discovered by the Electoral Commission, found to have been received in the lead-up to the 2011 State election, including from property developers—money that was able to be used by the governing party in that 2011 election, an election it won convincingly. That money had been unlawfully obtained but the governing party was able to use it nevertheless. There has been no mention of the \$4.4 million election funding frozen in the wake of revelations the Liberal Party had used money from banned donors to help bankroll its 2011 State election campaign. I note that money was later unfrozen but nevertheless the use of money, some of it not lawfully obtained, is not something that those opposite cared to refer to often in this debate.

For the edification of my constituents on the Central Coast, I need to refer to the former government members who held seats on the Central Coast: Garry Edwards, who was the member for Swansea; Michael

Gallacher, who was an upper House member resident on the Central Coast; Christopher Spence, who was the member for The Entrance; Chris Hartcher, former member for Terrigal; and Darren Webber, former member for Wyong. Operation Spicer found that those gentlemen had acted with the intention of evading laws under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 relating to the disclosure of political donors and the ban on donations from property developers. Darren Webber had also been found to have acted with the intention of evading the electoral funding laws relating to caps on political donations. Adverse findings were also made against Raymond Carter and Timothy Koelma, Liberal Party members resident on the Central Coast.

Insofar as the amendment to the Act will improve behaviour of participants in the political process overall, I welcome it and so should all members in this House. What it will not do is allow my constituents to go to the electoral funding website and look at how much money was donated to those former Liberal Party members for the Central Coast or Liberal Party candidates contesting on the Central Coast at the last election to see how much they personally received in donations, because they will not be able to see anything. That will not be changed by the bill.

Insofar as this bill improves the overall behaviour of participants in the electoral process, I welcome it. We could go farther. There needs to be a whole lot more done to avoid the arms race which is generated at local politics level during the campaign—the arms race that sees both parties spend an inordinate amount of money on bunting on election day, on the contest at pre-poll and all of those things that the public finds distasteful. None of that will be changed by the bill. However, insofar as it will slightly improve the behaviour of participants in the political process, I welcome the bill.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (16:40:37):** In reply: I do not know what that last bloke was on about. In fact, I do not even know who that last bloke is. In all honesty, what a cracker!

**Ms Kate Washington:** You're such a nice bloke!

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Coming from you, that is a bit rich. I note the interjection from the member for Port Stephens, who is the most popular member in this Chamber, without doubt. You could not get more popular than the member for Port Stephens. In relation to the legislation, there is nothing like starting it with a quote. I am going to quote someone who basically said:

... the ICAC investigations keep coming and the elections continue to be lost.

She said—it is a she I am talking about:

I was heartbroken to see our hardworking and incredible local candidates put their lives on hold and themselves into personal debt and unemployment as they worked themselves into the ground, were hounded to raise money, work harder and do more while our own head office sat on \$100,000 of illegal donations.

I thank the Hon. Penny Sharpe for making that comment which appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, because that goes to the heart of this legislation. This bill would not be here if it was not for what was going on and has been going on down at the corruption watchdog involving the Labor Party, its head office, bags of cash raised through the Chinese community and this ongoing nonsense that "There is nothing to see here", particularly from the Leader of the Opposition, who should know better.

In fact, she does not know what is going on. She has not even felt the need to speak to one of her shadow Ministers—the shadow Minister for Transport—about what he knew, when and how, and why he has now returned over \$10,000 of what constitutes, from what I can see, small cash donations made at functions by people he says he did not know but seems to have known. Yet the Leader of the Opposition sat idly by and completely ignored the conduct of one of her shadow Ministers. The bill is about providing a strong framework for political donations. Ultimately Labor has had to be shamed into this. Bags filled with cash, walking into the front door of Sussex Street with an Aldi plastic bag—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Your fellows just do it in brown paper bags—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens she is on three calls to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Basically this bill is here because of the issues that have confronted our community at ICAC. The Labor Party cheated at an election—cheated. It is straight out cheating to systematically turn a blind eye to donations raised illegally then plough those funds into marginal seats where candidates are giving it everything to participate in the democratic process with their local communities—and here is the Labor Party cheating. It is not good enough for the member for Kogarah, who is on a margin of 1.7 per cent and was under a lot of pressure during the last State election, to receive all of this money and then hand it back after the election, having won, and say, "Ah, there's nothing to see here from Labor; there's no problem."

The Leader of the Opposition does not think this is an issue. She goes around the State spreading pixie dust about how good she is and yet, ultimately, when it comes to issues like this, she turns a blind eye. She then has a habit of rewriting history, which is quite extraordinary if you consider that, with all the issues around this legislation being before the Parliament and what has gone on at the ICAC involving Sussex Street, the Leader of the Opposition went on Ray Hadley's program and basically denied any relationship with Kaila Murnain in becoming leader. She was questioned about her relationship with Murnain by Hadley. He asked, "Is it difficult for you that she was openly supporting you in your battle with Chris Minns for the leadership?" The Leader of the Opposition's response was, "She wasn't openly supportive. She had one vote like everyone else." We all know that is not true. The Leader of the Opposition comes in here and throws around rubbish about foreign funding and other things but as soon as the spotlight is put on the Labor Party everyone is ducking for cover.

This reform is so important because it is cleaning up the mess in the Labor Party. We on this side of the Chamber had to do that. As the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC, has said there has been review after review into the operations of Labor's head office but nothing changes and nothing is ever learned. She pointed out that the inquiries continue but nothing changes for the grassroots branch members of the Labor Party who are there for the right reasons. This bill is about dealing directly with those issues as they relate to political donations made in cash. It is a first, Australia wide, and it puts us at the forefront of transparency and integrity in terms of political participation in our democracy. We are not going to take a backward step. We do not want to see the actions of the Labor Party repeated, but those opposite never ever learned the lesson.

I turn to the specifics of the bill. It amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 to make it unlawful for a person to make or accept a political donation in cash that exceeds \$100. This change will make it easier to trace and account for significant political donations, removing potential opportunities to disguise their true source. This has been a major problem for the member for Kogarah. The Electoral Funding Act 2018 already establishes a rigorous framework for political donations, which includes donations caps, disclosure requirements and prohibited donor provisions. For example, the Act caps political donations to registered parties at \$6,400 per year. Political donations of \$1,000 or more are required to be reported.

The Act also prohibits donations from property developers and the tobacco, liquor or gaming industries. We want to strengthen the ability of the Electoral Commission to identify potential contraventions of the disclosure requirements, caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions under the Act. The important point is that political donations will leave a digital footprint as to from whom the funds have come, which is important. Subject to the existing caps on donations and prohibited donor provisions, it will still be possible to make and accept political donations which exceed \$100 but by using alternative payment methods.

It is only cash donations, which cannot be as reliably traced or accounted for, that exceed \$100 that will be banned. The \$100 threshold has been carefully considered to strike the right balance between ensuring that political donations are traceable, while avoiding an unreasonable administrative burden on parties, candidates and donors. The \$100 limit allows for political donations to continue to be made in certain circumstances where a non-cash alternative might not be feasible, such as buying raffle tickets at a fundraising event. The prohibition will not affect the application of existing provisions in the Act, which ensure that multiple donations from the same source are to be aggregated together for the purpose of the caps on donations and disclosure requirements.

A contravention of the proposed prohibition of cash donations of more than \$100 will be an offence under section 145 of the Act, which carries a maximum penalty of \$44,000 or imprisonment for two years, or both. These penalties are consistent with the maximum penalties for comparable offences with respect to prohibited donations, such as making or accepting a donation from a property developer. The anti-avoidance provision at section 144 of the Act will also continue to apply to anyone who deliberately seeks to circumvent the caps on donations, prohibited donor provisions and disclosure requirements.

This is a simple bill. I note that those opposite have indicated that they are willing to support this bill. However, if they want to talk about accountability, we on this side of the Chamber are not going to let up in terms of shining a light on the practices of the Labor Party. We are of the very strong opinion that members of the Labor Party have attempted to corrupt democracy in this State. They have attempted to win marginal seats off the back of dodgy donations, thereby potentially affecting the outcomes of elections. This Government won the last election with a majority of two seats. To those opposite who continue to turn a blind eye to what goes on in their own head office thinking it is okay I say that it is absolutely not okay. The fact that the ICAC is continuing its investigation into Labor's head office means that we cannot comment specifically on those actions, but I would say that when in the last 12 months those opposite went to other functions arranged by the Labor Party they would have seen multiple small cash donations made and those donations all add up.

In particular, we have seen the systemic masking of who made those donations, with members of this Parliament not knowing who has donated to separate campaign accounts. In the case of the member for Kogarah, Chris Minns, we know that there was a separate campaign account in his name for his campaign. That means that

those opposite cannot deny that there is a need for people not to be able to just turn up and say, "I don't know what has gone on." Those opposite tried to give the Government a lecture about openness and transparency, and yet they are not willing to stand up and explain what has gone on in their own ranks.

That could mean that the Leader of the Opposition is embarrassed that she has been at some of these functions or alternatively she does not want to even acknowledge that one of her shadow Ministers has paid back not just 50 bucks or 100 bucks but thousands of dollars in what was ultimately seen as concealed donations. That is simply outrageous. I think those opposite have a lot of explaining to do. The issue is not going to go away, because there will be more inquiries. It is very telling that many members opposite have not participated in this debate, because they know full well that we have had to introduce this bill to clean up the mess of the Labor Party. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ONLINE AND OTHER BETTING) BILL 2019

### Second Reading Speech

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (16:53:17):** On behalf of Mr Kevin Anderson: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 7 August and is in the same form, the second reading speech appears on pages 40 to 43 in the proof *Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (16:53:45):** I lead for the Opposition in the second reading debate on the Gambling Legislation Amendment (Online and Other Betting) Bill 2019. The Opposition will not oppose the bill and welcomes it. As my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, who led for the Opposition in the other place, said, this bill should have been introduced a number of months ago. The Opposition is pleased the bill has been introduced to bring New South Wales into line with all other States but notes that it should have been introduced earlier.

The bill will amend the Betting and Racing Act 1998 and the Totalizator Act 1997 to address problem gambling in relation to online betting. Gambling addiction is a significant problem in our society. Findings from the *Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia* [HILDA] survey show that in 2014-15 Australians gambled over \$190 billion, total gambling losses in 2014-15 were \$27.7 billion, or roughly \$1,200 for every person over the age of 18, and an estimated 8 per cent of Australians, or 1.4 million people, experience gambling problems each year. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists policy statement on problem gambling states:

The rise of interactive and online gambling is having devastating consequences; new gamblers are more easily recruited online and gambling sites are accessible 24 hours per day.

The bill addresses problem gambling by implementing aspects of the National Consumer Protection Framework on Online Wagering, which was endorsed by the Commonwealth and all the States and Territories in November 2018. The framework was developed in response to a review of illegal offshore wagering. It was completed by former Premier Barry O'Farrell in 2015. I understand that the current Prime Minister, then Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Scott Morrison, commissioned former Premier O'Farrell to produce this report. I acknowledge former Premier O'Farrell for his extensive report and thank him for taking the time and being kind enough to provide a briefing at my request. We discussed a number of issues related to online gambling and how we could work together. The foreword to the National Consumer Protection Framework on Online Wagering states in relation to the O'Farrell review:

The Review found that online gambling is the fastest growing gambling segment in Australia, with over \$1.4 billion gambled online each year. Of concern to all governments is that the rate of online problem gambling in Australia is three times higher than all other gambling platforms.

The framework further states:

The Review noted that one of the most significant changes to the gambling environment in Australia over the past 15 years has been the increased availability of online gambling. Research shows that online wagering is the fastest growing gambling segment, expanding at a rate of 15 per cent annually.

The framework also states:

The Review identified that a key legislative challenge in protecting consumers of online wagering in Australia is the coordination required to align the administration of more than 60 pieces of legislation, related to licensing and/or regulating online wagering. As a result, the regulatory framework for online wagering has been fragmented, inconsistent and led to increased compliance burdens for interactive wagering service providers in Australia.

As I have already mentioned, the bill will amend two Acts. First, the bill will prohibit direct marketing to holders of betting accounts without express consent. Second, the bill will prohibit inducements being offered to people in order to encourage them to open a betting account. Third, the bill will require providers of betting accounts to establish schemes to allow people to limit their deposit unless the person expressly opts out. Fourth, the bill will require providers of betting accounts to provide simple processes to close accounts and require that requests for accounts to be closed to be dealt with immediately.

Fifth, the bill will make clear that offers of gambling products with incentives relating to better odds are prohibited inducements. Sixth, the bill will provide circumstances in which directors of corporations will be liable for betting account offences. I note that the bill was amended in the Legislative Council on 22 October. I state for the record that I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Customer Service and his staff. I also acknowledge the work of the crossbench—The Greens, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, One Nation and all other crossbench members—and members of the Labor Party for working together to formulate the amendments.

**Debate interrupted.**

*Public Interest Debate*

## **BUSHFIRES AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:00:30):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales continues to face severe fire conditions.
- (2) Acknowledges the efforts of thousands of firefighters, the Rural Fire Service and volunteers deployed across the State who are working tirelessly to fight these fires and support the communities affected.

I welcome contributions to this debate by members on both sides of the House. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the member for Oxley and the member for Myall Lakes because their electorates as well as my electorate and the electorates of other members of this House have had a pretty tough time over the past few weeks, in some cases months. Those members and I know only too well the impact that bushfires are having on our communities. Sadly, that impact will continue for the weeks and months ahead. I reiterate that I genuinely welcome contributions from all members to the debate on this issue, particularly from Opposition members, but I hope that we get through this debate without members using it as an opportunity for political mileage, for example, commenting on alleged cuts to the NSW Rural Fire Service.

I acknowledge also the presence in the Chamber of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who also knows that those comments simply are not correct. I ask members who contribute to this debate to focus on the impact that bushfires have had on communities and use this debate as an opportunity to acknowledge the incredible volunteers who have stood beside members of our communities throughout weeks and months of extreme adversity. In some cases the volunteers' efforts have meant that houses and communities were saved but in other cases people were not as fortunate. I will refer to statistics mentioned by the Minister during question time today. As of this morning, 48 bushfires or grassfires are burning across the State and 20 of those are still uncontained. The resources consist of 1,400-plus firefighters, 415-plus vehicles and more than 90 aircraft.

I am sure the Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I have utilised the Fires Near Me app, as I am sure have many other members of this House. At this stage there are no fires rated as emergency warning but we know very well that conditions can change very quickly. As a resident of Lake Cathie I saw that happen. It was pretty frightening and certainly a little surreal to be in a meeting and get an emergency warning about preparing to evacuate our homes. As members know, total fire bans are in place and no doubt they will continue to apply. Severe fire bans apply in a number of regions in the State. Sadly, the bushfires and grassfires have caused such devastation across so many different fire fronts, resulting in 577 homes being destroyed. Hopefully we can keep it at that but even one home destroyed is one too many because the loss of a home has an enormous impact on the individual and a ripple effect across communities, particularly small communities.

I refer to the community of Johns River in my electorate. Only a couple of houses were lost but, sadly, we lost a life there. That has had such an impact on that community. I look forward to supporting them in whatever way I can. They are suffering. They lost an integral member of their community. She was a strong advocate for that community and, sadly, she is no longer there with them. Across the State this fire season six lives have been lost and more than 1.6 million hectares of land have burned. We know very well that there is a long fire season ahead. It is going to be very tough for our volunteers on the ground. But our Rural Fire Service and other volunteers will continue to step up. They are there because they want to contribute to their communities. They want to give, and let me tell you they have given in spades over the past few weeks, particularly on the mid North Coast.

I acknowledge the community of Lake Cathie, who yesterday held a community thankyou day. It did not mark an end to the fire season nor the work of our volunteers but it was a time for the community to come together to not only say thankyou to our incredible RFS volunteers but also reflect on what we have been through as a community. At Lake Cathie there were four aircrafts for a full hour—two fixed-wing aircrafts and two dropping water—supporting our volunteers on the ground. At one stage an aircraft flew over my house. It was just incredible. It spoke to me of how close things can come. The Lake Cathie thankyou day was organised completely by the community. The Minister was prepared to support us but I said to him, "You really don't need to because this community has done it all." The Lake Cathie Progress Association, the Lake Cathie-Bonny Hills Lions Club and Revive Lake Cathie all played a part.

Hundreds of people turned out to this incredible event. As I said, it was an opportunity for us to reflect and take note of the community spirit of Lake Cathie. The authenticity of the appreciation of my community was there for all to see. They were there for one reason and one reason only: to say thankyou to our RFS and State Emergency Service volunteers, the local police, the Fire and Rescue staff and the National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel, who played a very critical role at our headquarters and provided inside information about the national parks and where the fire was impacting. I thank the two bands who played on the day for free: Alter Ego and Chill Factor. I told the Minister that he left a little early because the dancing started just after he left. It was great to see our volunteers in yellow dancing in the park. It was a wonderful event. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:07:52):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for moving this public interest debate motion, which states:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales continues to face severe fire conditions.
- (2) Acknowledges the efforts of thousands of firefighters, the Rural Fire Service and volunteers deployed across the State who are working tirelessly to fight these fires and support the communities affected.

Locals on the ground and our fireys, as we affectionately call them, are well aware of the fires. Members who have been out and about with their communities have met a lot of the fireys on the front line. The other day when I went to Torrington I walked into the fire brigade shed and saw the firefighters having a break for a couple of minutes. The smoke was starting to billow pretty close by and they would have to go out again. The only thing I could say was, "Thank you". They were all absolutely exhausted. After a while the smoke started to ramp up and off they went again. It has been like that right across my electorate.

I thank everybody who has visited my electorate during this period, including the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales—Torrington is close to our shared border—the New South Wales Leader of the Opposition and the Federal Leader of the Opposition. I apologise to anyone I have forgotten. I have been out and about with those visitors to say a big thankyou to all our volunteers. The Leader of the Opposition's visit to Drake was welcomed by locals because Drake is not a place that people often visit. We had lunch at the Lunatic Hotel in Drake—the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been there too—and I thank the staff there for keeping the food going for everybody in the area, including our firefighters.

In the Lismore local government area 88 per cent of assessments have been completed, with two homes lost, two outbuildings lost, 30 homes saved and two outbuildings saved. Rural Fire Service superintendent Michael Brett has overseen that. I thank him and superintendent Toby Lindsay for leading the team in Lismore. We hear about everything that has been lost but sometimes we forget about everything that has been saved. A lot has been saved. In the Tenterfield local government area 91 per cent of assessments have been completed, with 22 homes lost, 32 outbuildings lost and 132 homes saved.

During this debate members have come into this place and said, "We don't want to play politics." We are all in the business of politics because we care about our communities. "Politics" is not a dirty word. Politics is about the art of compromise and doing good. Sometimes it is okay to talk about politics, particularly when we are talking about policy. Recently I was on national TV while I was in Nimbin. That got a lot of coverage for the wrong reasons. The woman in that video was traumatised. She was fearful that her husband would be trapped in

the line of fire while he was out defending their community. She was fearful for her home. She was fearful about a lot of things.

I was there, I am her local member and I stayed with her. I will not name her, of course, but she was shattered. She was very sorry for what happened and we are fine. I am supporting her and she is supporting me. But that is the trauma being felt and everyone is showing that trauma in different ways. But we are okay. I made a conscience decision to not travel to Sydney for Parliament last week, with the support of the Parliament. I thank you all for that. I thank the Whips and everyone else. I want to indicate that people do want to talk about everything and they do want to talk about policy and funding. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (17:13:15):** I speak to the motion moved by the member for Port Macquarie. I was disappointed to hear Tathra mentioned in question time today. In particular I was disappointed in the way it was mentioned. I make this point: The member for Lismore might want to talk about us being politicians but we are also humans. Quite frankly, there is no place for politics in any of this. None, nil, nada. Everyone should be working together. Today we heard that only six homes have been rebuilt in Tathra. Unfortunately, when this type of devastation happens in a community people are so traumatised that they do not want to rebuild and they do not want to move back. They have to move on because it is so traumatic. I could not believe that line of questioning today. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, please change your tactic. She went to Tathra on the weekend but I would have preferred if she had visited evacuation centres to speak to the people going through trauma and to say that we are all in this together in a bipartisan way.

I am not aware of one insurance payout to a Tathra resident not being made because the coronial inquiry is yet to start. Looking back at the time frame of the coronial inquiry after the Blue Mountains fires, if my memory serves me correctly the fires happened in October 2013 and the coroner did not start an inquiry until mid-2015. Unfortunately, I suspect those fires started for the same reason as the Reedy Creek swamp fire which then moved to the Bega-Tathra fire—that is, trees outside the regular designated zones and in blast furnace conditions were blown onto powerlines, bringing those powerlines down and igniting a fire. Essential Energy acknowledged that at the time of the fire. The Rural Fires Service investigators picked that up and referred the matter to the police and that then went on to form part of the coronial inquest.

In the meantime, the former emergency services Minister, Troy Grant, appointed former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Keelty to undertake an independent review so that we could learn from the Tathra experience and apply it now—and we are. That is the point. This should be done in a bipartisan way. One of the most important actions the Premier of this State has taken is to appoint Euan Ferguson, who did the Tathra clean-up and recovery, to all these communities. He is an incredible man. Jodi, go and talk to him. He will tell you what is required. He will tell you about the trauma people are going to go through.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** I think your community would like you to talk to him.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** No, you go and talk to him and take the time to visit the evacuation centres. Don't go down to the Tathra pub and get Instagram shots with the former Labor candidate. Just go and talk to these people. If there is someone who has not received an insurance payout for the Tathra fires because the coronial inquest is yet to start I want to know who they are because there has not been anyone indicated to me. There has been the odd issue with insurance that I have worked through with my electorate office for a number of policyholders but I am not aware of anybody who has been refused a payout by an insurance company because of the coroner. Therein lies the point. To help everybody out, the *Bega District News* referred to Tathra residents who were clients of the NRMA, or IAG which trades as NRMA, writing:

Among those clients were John and Jan Harris, whose Vimy Ridge home was completely destroyed. Thankfully, John said, an insurance payout from IAG was not dependent on any outcome of a coronial inquiry, with the couple receiving the full cost of their home within a month of the fire.

I think we need to dispel the myth.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** What about compensation?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Let us be clear: The Government put \$10 million into recovery to pay for the clean-up and everything else so that people did not have to dip into their pockets. The emergency services Minister and the Premier have announced \$25 million to start that process. Tens of thousands of tons of debris will have to be removed. It is hard. Residents have to comb through sites looking for personal items they want to hold onto and cherish—if there is anything left. It has to be worked through. There are challenges with asbestos, with slabs and with tip capacity, which councils run. When political comments are made about these communities, I ask for consideration of the human impact of what is being said. From Tathra we learned invaluable lessons, which are being applied now through Euan Ferguson. Please can we stop the politics. It is not helping anyone; it is actually damaging people.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:18:12):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing this public interest debate to the House today. I also thank and acknowledge the member for Lismore for her contribution to this debate, and even the member for Bega. I know what members are going through as community leaders who must stand alongside survivors of bushfire disasters at this difficult time. I have gone through it myself in the Blue Mountains. In recent weeks I visited the member for Lismore's community and met with her constituents, and I listened to the good people of Drake talk about the pain and devastation they have faced in recent months. But I must take exception with the tone and the politicking that has gone on today and in recent days in this Parliament by the Liberals and The Nationals in Government. The Premier and her emergency services Minister have hidden behind the unfolding tragedy of natural disaster and have refused to take responsibility for their heartless cuts to frontline emergency services—

**Mr David Elliott:** Fake news.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** You have. There have been cuts. Politicising the bureaucracy is a disgraceful act of base political cowardice.

**Mr David Elliott:** Politicising the bureaucracy?

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** Yes, when you force the commissioner to stand up and say they have never had it so good. There have been significant recurring cuts to the emergency services agencies, and I will go through those cuts one by one.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** In this year's budget we see cuts to the Fire and Rescue NSW employee-related operating budget.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I was already on two calls.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Cessnock is now on three calls to order.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** Expenses of \$13.1 million were cut from Fire and Rescue NSW. We see cuts of \$10.25 million to Fire and Rescue's other operating expenses on the same page of the budget papers. That is at page 6-15, for those opposite reading their own copies. As the member for Cessnock pointed out last week, only when we add back in almost \$10.5 million in depreciation and finance costs do we arrive at the final cut to the expenses budget of \$12.9 million. After taking away the accounting tricks, it is actually a real-world cut of \$23 million from frontline budgets at Fire and Rescue NSW.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for Terrigal to order for the first time.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** That is \$23 million from frontline budgets at Fire and Rescue NSW. What is that worth, Minister? If a firey gets paid around \$91,000 per annum, including super, that is about 255 permanent firefighters who could be paid for this year. Did I mention that \$23 million is a recurring cut? That is what they have to find every year in their Orwellian labour expense cap of 1.2 per cent—

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Blue Mountains will resume her seat.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** It is under Standing Order 129. The motion states very clearly that we are talking about the Rural Fire Service and volunteers. I ask that the member be brought back to the subject of the motion.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Blue Mountains will speak to the motion.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** The Government tells us that the Rural Fire Service [RFS] has never had it so good. Of course, it is not just the Rural Fire Service out there on the fire ground.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for Terrigal to order for the second time.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** They do marvellous work, and we must thank them. They do fantastic work, and so many of them are volunteers. Given they are volunteers, let us look at the other operating expenses line in the budget papers. It is page 6-30 of the budget papers, Minister. The other operating expenses line in the budget has been cut by \$17.4 million this year.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blue Mountains will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** This is RFS.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** It is again relevance. There is nothing in the motion about the budget or dollar amounts. The motion is about the severe fire conditions we are facing and the efforts of our volunteers. This is not a political debate about budget and dollars. We are here to recognise our volunteers.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. I ask for a second time that the member for Blue Mountains speak to the motion.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** I raise these issues today because as I sat listening to the bombastic nonsense of the emergency services Minister in question time, what I was most worried about was my son. My son is a firefighter.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order! I want to hear the contribution of the member for Blue Mountains.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** He has been sent to the front line of the firefighting efforts at the Gospers Mountain fire. I am worried about him because I am his mum, but I am also worried about his comrades. The personal is political, folks. I worry about them because as a legislator in this place I know that it is our job to provide him and them with the equipment, resources and support that they need to do their jobs, to protect our communities and to come home safely.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for Terrigal to order for the third time.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** The cuts to the emergency services budget reduce the number of firefighters out there on the ground. It has forced those who are out there to work longer and harder. The cuts, Minister, have a real face and they have real consequences.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) (17:24:29):** It is a privilege for me to speak on this motion. In the fires of last week the Myall Lakes electorate lost 101 dwellings; seven facilities, including Bobin Public School and the Rainbow Flat Rural Fire Service station and 218 outbuildings were damaged. There were 811 dwellings, 54 facilities and 756 outbuildings saved. That was just last week, but fires have been burning since July. A section 44 declaration was made a couple of weeks before that, when the town of Tuncurry was almost lost. It was only through the outstanding work of the RFS, Fire and Rescue NSW and others that so much was saved.

Last Tuesday in excess of 1,000 RFS volunteers were on the fireground in my area and fighting over 50 fires just in my electorate, without looking at the rest of the State. Any one of those fires would have been of State significance 12 months ago, but they were all burning at the same time. We stood shoulder to shoulder with the local RFS. Central Coast and Hunter Valley RFS crews also attended. Fire and Rescue NSW crews from Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley attended along with strike teams. Firefighters came from South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory with their trucks. Others were flown in by the air force. In the sky were Black Hawk helicopters, and other firefighting helicopters and aeroplanes. All of that was happening in just that 24 hours.

There have been hundreds of fires in the Myall Lakes electorate and the State since July. The fires are ongoing. I did not expect to be taking part in this debate today, hearing this situation being politicised, particularly by the member for Blue Mountains. I think she worked for Phil Koperberg at some stage. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons was appointed by the Labor Government—not by the Coalition. He said, "I don't know how many times we've got to publicly address this. I have addressed this with the various media outlets that have been fed this story. It is rubbish. It is misinformation. It has been misrepresented, and I think it's disgracefully misrepresented here today and in these sorts of circumstances." He said, "We have got more money today than we have ever had before in the history of the organisation. We have got record funding in particular programs." For example, this year there has been an increase of \$62 million—

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** Point of order—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Myall Lakes will resume his seat.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 76, relevance. If the Opposition speaker was requested to return to the substance of the motion I ask that Government members also adhere to that same standing order.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Myall Lakes is being relevant. Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. A number of members who are interjecting may wish to make a private member's statement. I would love to ask them to leave the Chamber, because I want to make a private member's statement. If they continue with their interjections they will be asked to remove themselves from the Chamber.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** The budget of last year included significant one-off capital purchases. This included \$21.5 million for the NSW Rural Fire Service headquarters that was opened in November last year, \$23.8 million for the NSW RFS Training Academy in Dubbo and \$26.3 million for the *Marie Bashir* large air tanker. There is no greater feeling than being on the fireground and seeing that thing flying over you and dropping a whole lot of pink stuff. It is fantastic. The Government has now hired a second one and I think we are getting a third one.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Government members are not helping.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** On Saturday one of the very large air tanker [VLAT] helicopters was helping. As I said, this Government is doing so much. I talk to the guys in the various brigades and they appreciate the number of new category 9s, category 1s and category 7s along with the pumpers and new brigade stations that are being delivered.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Oxley will come to order.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** I have had the privilege of opening a number of those in my electorate. It was great to be able to do that. I will look at what we are doing with the fire in my electorate. Euan Ferguson is already on the ground looking at the recovery. Today, a fund of \$25 million was announced to get rid of the debris and \$1.2 million was allocated to BlazeAid for the farmers who have lost fences.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for Oxley to order for the first time. I call the member for South Coast to order for the first time.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** An emergency contact number has been provided so that people can get feed and water for their stock.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I call the member for South Coast to order for the second time.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Emergency headquarters have been set up at Taree and a number of other places where people can go to get government assistance. Everything that can be done is being done. This is only the start. As more is needed more will be delivered. I will be meeting with Euan Ferguson on Saturday to talk about what is happening in my electorate. This is really important. I commend the Government for what it is doing.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:30:49):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing this public interest debate before the House today. I thank every member of this House who has been out there representing their communities, standing up for them and supporting them during this very challenging time. On the Central Coast we know what it is like to be surrounded by bush. We also know what it is like to be surrounded by fire. Lots of us have strong memories of when the train line and the express way were shut, and the only way in and out of the Central Coast was by boat. As we meet in Parliament House today, 20 uncontrolled fires are raging across the State. Just west of my electorate, Gaspers Mountain is burning. More than 140,000 hectares—an area bigger than Malta and Singapore combined—are currently on fire. The Wollemi and Yengo national parks and Parr State Forest are on fire. On the far western side of the Gosford electorate, residents have been asked by the RFS to implement their bushfire survival plans and prepare their properties.

Today in the House I thank those who have coordinated, and are continuing to coordinate, the evacuation of livestock across the Gosford electorate. I think those in the Gosford electorate are lucky because, hopefully, they will have time to make the necessary preparations. I also send massive thanks to every single person who was involved in the back-burn last night across the central and lower MacDonald River, Webbs Creek, Colo and St Albans areas. Community members inform me that there were loads of fire trucks out there. I know the member for Blue Mountains woke up this morning to find out that her son was probably amongst the crew that was trying to make the MacDonald River a fair and safe fire break to protect the whole of the Gosford electorate as it comes up into our farming community.

It was pretty frightening this morning when I woke up to see that my bestie had sent a photo from just across the river, where the whole mountain was on fire. But that was a controlled fire, putting things in place for what is to come. Today I send a massive shout-out to the Spencer RFS for its continued work to keep the community strong and safe. I also thank the Mangrove Mountain RFS, which is meeting at 7.30 tonight. I send my apologies, but I know that they will be acting in the best interests of the community alongside the Calga-Mount White and Kulnura brigades, and all the other branches across the Central Coast that are getting ready for what

may come on Thursday as the weather gets worse. I think all of us have had a chance to pop into our local RFS stations over the past few weeks. They have been very diligent in our communities and continue to be diligent, going about their training and looking after the equipment. I thank Mick Henly, Central Coast Fire and Rescue Superintendent, and all those working at the fire control centres across New South Wales, including the centre at Kariong.

I send condolences to everyone who has suffered a loss in the fires across New South Wales, because a loss of human life hurts all of us. Our love from the House goes out to families, friends and communities who have lost loved ones. We are also thinking of all of those who have had property damaged in the fires. I acknowledge the member for Lismore. I think all of us felt her pain and the trauma when she had face-to-face contact with the poor lady who had suffered so much loss.

I also recognise everyone across New South Wales who has lost family pets and livestock. I acknowledge the massive loss of native species that continues to occur across the State and I thank everyone who is involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of native species. The Port Macquarie Koala Hospital is probably a symbol to all of us of what is possible. The people there are picking up the pieces and feeling the pain of the loss that the fire has caused to the work that they have put in. I thank all of them, and send condolences and energy to them. I thank the paid workers. I thank all the amazing volunteer animal rescue organisations across the State. I know in my electorate WIRES does an amazing job with loads of fully trained volunteers and loads more volunteers emerging throughout the emergency who are on very steep learning curves with marsupials, birds and reptiles in their care. I wish Teddy, the rescued sugar glider on the North Coast, and her carer, Kristina, the very best.

I thank the Rural Fire Service, forestry firefighters and State Emergency Service volunteers who are not only protecting human lives but also taking the time to collect the young eastern grey joey trapped in the dam, to give a leaf tailed gecko a drink from a water bottle and collect a singed brush tail possum from a chicken coop and deliver them to carers. Today I call on the Premier to reflect on the catastrophe we are continuing to see unfold in New South Wales and look deeply into the Treasury budget next year. The people of New South Wales are collectively flabbergasted with the cuts that have occurred. I ask the Premier, who is about to privatise a whole bunch of our State forest, to ensure we hold on to every single very important firefighting resource we have in this State.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:35:53):** I join other members in thanking the member for Port Macquarie for moving this motion. I express my deep concern, my community's deep concern and the concern of other members for the loss of life and homes across the State. It is devastating. I know I join many members in this place and our community in feeling a deep sense of unease. My community was fortunate in the sense that there was no loss of property or life. My Rural Fire Service teams were fighting in the electorate of Lismore and further south. They are incredible selfless volunteers. Over 1,300 members of my community attended a meeting in Mullumbimby on Monday 11 November to prepare for the catastrophic conditions predicted for the following day. The threatened communities included Goonengeery, Koonyum Range, Main Arm, Palmwoods, Huonbrook, Wanganui and Wilsons Creek.

NSW Rural Fire Service operations manager for region north, Brian Daley, was joined by Detective Chief Inspector Matt Kehoe from the Tweed-Byron Local Area Command and representatives from Byron Shire Council. They provided information to over 1,000 residents from fire-affected areas who gathered in Mullumbimby. My team and I headed out with State Emergency Service volunteers to knock on doors in some of the more isolated communities. There are people living in illegal dwellings, and I was incredibly moved and humbled by the conditions that some people live in out there in the bush. We assisted people to go to the Mullumbimby evacuation centre. To see that operation was extraordinary.

The week before, at the southern end of my electorate, the communities of Wardell, Cabbage Tree Island and Meerscham Vale were threatened by grass fires. Residents of Cabbage Tree Island were evacuated because of out-of-control grass fires in Wardell. I extend a huge thanks to the Department of Communities and Justice personnel, led by evacuation centre manager, Grace Breikreutz, the Red Cross, Jali Land Council, Anglicare, the chaplaincy service and Ballina and Lismore police for their work. There was impeccable organisation and incredible around-the-clock service from volunteers. Watching the coordinated efforts of the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, police and volunteers in my electorate was nothing short of astonishing for me. Saying that they have done and continue to do an amazing job is a complete understatement.

As well as the risk to members of my community there were concerns about risks to horses, cattle and other livestock on properties. The manager of the Mullumbimby showgrounds, Kelly West, worked with my office and was ably assisted by the office of the agriculture Minister and the Deputy Premier's office to support a designated evacuation centre for stock and horses. I thank them for their support with this process. Unfortunately, what we are seeing here is going to become the new normal. What we have seen with the preceding stubborn drought and catastrophic weather conditions bodes very badly. Some have argued that it is too soon to speak about

these things, that fires are still burning and communities and lives are still at risk. My question to those people is: How much worse are we proposing to let things get? Of course none of us wants this to continue to be our new normal, yet we continue to burn and export coal and gas making our climate crisis worse. We are not taking this seriously enough.

In a briefing I received from one of my fire chiefs I was advised that the Mount Nardi rainforest in the Lismore electorate is burning for the first time since 1964. In his words: No amount of back-burning could have prevented the type of canopy fire that he witnessed in that rainforest. It has been so deprived of rain that 3,000 hectares of it burned in the space of a couple of days. That has subsequently increased to over 6,000 hectares. In the midst of dealing with this disaster even fire chiefs and community members acknowledge that we need to deal with the climate crisis. We face a climate emergency. We are in a moment of national mourning and now is the time to act. If not now, when? We know what we need to do; we have known for years. We can build a renewable energy economy that will produce tens of thousands of jobs and make crises such as the one we have witnessed the exception rather than the rule.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:40:44):** In reply: I thank all members who have made a contribution to the debate. I acknowledge the very difficult time the member for Lismore has had in her electorate recently. We all understand the trauma she was experiencing. It is difficult to contain your emotions when you are going through such a difficult time. I thank the member for Bega, my colleague the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Blue Mountains, the member for Gosford and the member for Ballina. As was mentioned by the members for Ballina and Gosford, I acknowledge the many different volunteers responding to the fires. We cannot thank enough the Rural Fire Service volunteers, and volunteers from other services and agencies such as the State Emergency Service.

Entire communities have come on board to volunteer. The koala hospital was mentioned, where the incredible volunteers do an amazing job. At Charles Sturt University, Port Macquarie, there are 200 interstate volunteers. We have recently had New Zealand volunteers join them. I thank the local Lions and Rotary clubs for preparing all of their meals from product that has been donated. It is incredible to see individuals step up and open local shops to become drop-off points for non-perishable goods. There are many stories about the amazing community spirit, which reflects the dedication of those selfless volunteers and the work they will do for us in the weeks and months ahead as we move into summer.

I was hoping that we would not get into a political debate, so I find it disappointing that the alleged budget cuts were raised. We know that is not correct. How sad that someone on the opposite side of the House would intimate in the slightest terms that the commissioner would tell untruths, not once but many times. He was frustrated by the conversation about cuts to the RFS budget, which he knows to be untrue. It is shameful that those opposite would suggest the commissioner would do such a thing. He is an absolutely incredible man and should be held in high regard by those opposite.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**NSW TOURISM AWARDS**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government) (17:44:42):** Now in its thirtieth year, the NSW Tourism Awards acknowledge and celebrate tourism excellence. This program rewards businesses that demonstrate significant achievement throughout the year. With 27 submission categories available, the awards showcase a variety of tourism products and businesses delivering outstanding service to guests in New South Wales. The awards aim to encourage and celebrate creativity, professionalism and innovation; provide a benchmark for best practice within the tourism industry; promote business planning amongst New South Wales tourism operators; encourage the continual raising of standards and reinforce the value of the tourism industry; publicly recognise and reward excellence; reinforce consumer confidence in the tourism industry; provide an annual platform of celebration for the industry; offer networking opportunities for operators, supporters and sponsors alike; and provide the opportunity for successful entrants to progress to the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

Judging of the NSW Tourism Awards is coordinated by the tourism division of the NSW Business Chamber. All judges provide their time and expertise on a voluntary basis. They are educated in the entire judging process, including assessing submissions, scoring guidelines, undertaking site inspections and providing quality constructive feedback to entrants. I offer a big thank you to each of the judges, including the chair of the judges, Lisa Campbell. I congratulate all finalists and winners of the 2019 NSW Tourism Awards, but I must pay special mention to the award winners from the South Coast.

Shoalhaven Visitor Services, which is located on the South Coast of New South Wales, consists of Nowra and Ulladulla visitor centres and is run by Shoalhaven City Council. The team was awarded silver in this year's awards. The visitor services team consists of 14 staff and 48 volunteer ambassadors, supported by a dynamic tourism team within council. Always looking to reach its audience in new and innovative ways, the visitor services team has a mobile information van out in the region at popular hotspots throughout summer and at events, as well as 10 supplementary centres as part of the Ask Me I'm A Local program run by local businesses out in the region.

Cupitt's is a multifaceted tourism-focused business producing artisan wine, beer and cheese as well as farming Black Angus beef and maintaining an expansive kitchen garden. Cupitt's was awarded silver at this year's awards. The estate-made produce is showcased in the award-winning Cupitt's Kitchen restaurant. In addition to a dining experience, visitors can enjoy daily behind-the-scenes tours, wine, beer and cheese tasting, educational workshops and events including Cupitt's monthly farmers' markets. Cupitt's is a small family business with a big commitment to environmental sustainability, offering genuine paddock-to-plate dining with low food miles. It is focused on adopting sustainable practices in all aspects of its business. Congratulations to Rosie Cupitt and her team on their ongoing success. I suggest that if anybody visits the South Coast they should go to Cupitt's.

South Coast Nannies is a family-owned business located in Nowra on the New South Wales South Coast and won bronze this year. It provides quality, dependable and flexible childminding services to suit the individual and diverse needs of families visiting and living in the area. Professional childcare services increase the appeal of the destination. In addition to families, its clients include wedding, event and conference organisers, and venues that hire nannies to provide childminding services for their clients. It is committed to the tourism and nanny industries, and delivering peace of mind to families by recognising the importance of connecting parents with qualified, experienced professional nannies. I know firsthand the wonderful job that they do.

Inspired by nature and set amongst the pristine backdrop of Seven Mile Beach National Park at Shoalhaven Heads, Bangalay Luxury Villas is moments from award-winning wineries, white sandy beaches and boutique shopping experiences. It won bronze at the awards. Those who appreciate authenticity, style and quality will love the genuine, natural and peaceful accommodation offering. Onsite restaurant Bangalay Dining provides a premium coastal dining experience, featuring a unique native-inspired menu. The 16 private luxury villas feature golf course or garden views, a fireplace and a sun-filled north-facing deck, encouraging rest and relaxation. Bangalay is the perfect blend of nature and the finer things in life. Well done to Michelle Bishop on your team's ongoing success.

With the Christmas season soon upon us, the South Coast can expect to be inundated with tourists attracted to the natural beauty of the region along with many of the attractions. As one of the most visited regions across the State, the South Coast's success is due to each and every hardworking local business and tourism operator. Time and time again they provide unique experiences, quality goods and award-winning food, ensuring visitors from across the nation and, in fact, the world continue to holiday in our beautiful part of the world. I could talk all day about the wonderful businesses and community groups that make the South Coast such an amazing place for tourists to visit as well as a truly glorious place to live. I wish everyone a wonderful, happy Christmas and a wonderful break over the New Year.

#### NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:49:48):** Here we are. We have made it to the end of another sitting year in Parliament, and what a year it has been. For me it began on a high and with great pride, with the wonderful people of Newcastle returning me to this position for my second full term with a swing of over 10 per cent. I do not take this for granted. Novocastrians have put their trust in me to stand up for them in this Chamber and fight for them every step of the way. This year there have some very big issues in Newcastle and very big debates in Parliament. I have used every opportunity to raise my voice.

One of the issues I have been exceptionally vocal about is the devastating erosion of Stockton Beach. I am proud to say that with the efforts of the Stockton community we are making progress in drawing the Government's attention to this situation. As a result of significant pressure from me, my Labor colleagues and Stockton residents, we were finally able to bring Government Ministers to Stockton to see this crisis firsthand. I was especially heartened to hear that the Minister for Local Government anticipated that a long-term solution would be identified by the end of the year. The community and I are eagerly awaiting further news.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the harbour the active shadow transport Minister, Jo Haylen, and I have been campaigning with Newcastle's cycling community for safe cycleways through the CBD. This work culminated in the revelation that safety audits had identified high-risk areas for cyclists along Newcastle's light rail route before the service even began operating—exactly what we had been telling them all along and exactly what they did not want to listen to. When it comes to what is best for Newcastle, no-one knows this better than Novocastrians themselves.

We know what we are capable of. With the right tools, we know what we can contribute to this State. One thing we can contribute is our manufacturing skills. Trains, ships, ferries, buses: We have made them all before and we could do it again, if this hypocritical Government stopped offshoring manufacturing contracts. On more than one occasion I have stood with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Yasmin Catley, and we have also been joined by the Leader of the Opposition, Jodi McKay, to show this Government exactly where it could be sending those contracts—sending those jobs—and what it could be adding to the New South Wales economy.

We all know, though, that this Government does not do anything that does not benefit it. The final nail in the coffin under the fallacy of revitalising Newcastle came just a few weeks ago when the last piece of the former rail corridor was listed for sale—the same rail corridor that we were assured would not go on the market. All this Government saw was money to be made—and make money it did. It took a lot of work, but I was able to find out just how much. Over \$400 million worth of publicly owned property has been sold in Newcastle since 2011 and I can tell you exactly where it is. Let us also not forget that they flogged off our port, meaning in eight long years this Government has reaped over \$2 billion dollars from the city of Newcastle in sales alone.

While there is plenty to fight for, there is something that members of this Parliament have done well. It was long overdue, but we finally removed abortion from the Crimes Act. We finally recognised abortion as the health issue that it actually is. We finally recognised that women are the only people who should be making decisions about their own bodies. We stopped legally stigmatising and shaming women who made this decision. I have voted on a lot of bills in this House, but whether I am here for three more years or 30 years, this will rank as one of the most important and one that I could not be prouder to support. I have put up a lot of fights this year. Some you win and some you do not. There are three years left in this term and many more fights to come. There is one thing that I promise the people of Newcastle: I will not stop fighting. Thank you to the people of Newcastle. I too want to say all the best to my colleagues in this House on both sides of the Chamber.

#### **COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:54:53):** The Coffs Harbour electorate has an abundance of good sports men and women. Their hard work, passion and preparation continue to bring success across many fields of endeavour. They are truly an inspiration. Take for example Ben McDonald, who, at the age of 47, has returned triumphant from the South Australian BMX titles with three State championships. He is a proud member of the Coffs Coast BMX Club. Coffs Coast Boardriders Club has been in sensational form throughout the year and is considered one of the best in the business nationally. We look forward to the Australian Boardriders final in Newcastle in February. Coffs Harbour surfer Ethan Stocks ended his year on a high after finishing in the top four at the Phillip Island Pro, one of the last events on the World Surf League's qualifying series for 2019. Ethan charged into the semifinal before being edged out by Wollongong's Lucas Wrice.

A new world champion is in our midst with Woolgoolga CrossFit's Lars Kristensen flying high at the International Functional Fitness Federation Masters in Brisbane. Lars, who claimed the over-30s division, is a gymnast by trade, who spent years with Cirque du Soleil. St John Paul College student Georgie Martin puts plenty of runs on the board in the sport she loves as one of our leading cricket talents. Georgie was selected in the All Schools NSW under-16 indoor cricket team. This summer she steps up to play with the Sydney Tigers in Sydney Women's first grade.

Dale Johnson is a para-equestrian competitor who started riding horses at the age of 11. He is the pride of the Coffs Coast with major competition success nationally and internationally. When he was six months old Dale contracted meningitis. The viral infection left him with an acquired brain injury resulting in multiple permanent complications, including a stroke, epilepsy, hearing loss and development impairment. When aged 17 he won his first Riding for the Disabled Association competition in the Asia Pacific Para-Equestrian Dressage video competition. Now 30, Dale took out the overall para-equestrian champion at the Horse First New South Wales Dressage Championships at Tamworth.

Coffs City skydiver Jessica Johnston is right up there with the best of the best. She has returned from the Speed Skydiving World Cup in England with bronze, matching it with the fastest women on earth. Not only that, she set a new Australian and Oceania record and has no plans of slowing down. We have an outstanding group of local athletes who have won the hearts of our community with their blazing paddles. Gary Corrigan, Grant Armessen, John Smyth, Sarsi Holst and Sharon Williams put in stellar performances at the 2019 Australian Dragon Boat Championships—Auschamps—in Canberra. The women shone in particular with their bronze in the 500 metre small boats division. They can be regularly seen training with the Coffs Coast Dragon Boat Club on the Bellinger River at Mylestom and in Bonville Creek. I enjoyed presenting them with their New South Wales Government certificates signed by Premier Gladys Berejiklian and myself.

In an outstanding achievement for local hockey, the Coffs Coast under-13 girls and under-13 boys both claimed gold at their State Hockey Championships in Parkes and Grafton. They are two champion teams,

supported by strong leaders and enthusiastic families. Hockey Coffs Coast President Joel Matthews told the local newspaper:

We've got a great crop of young hockey players here and we certainly punch above our weight when it comes to the state championships. But these sorts of results don't just happen. They rely on a dedicated team of coaches, parents, managers and supporters. We'd like to thank Rick Fischer, Emma Brownlee, Tania Irwin and Tim Rodgers in particular for giving up their time to help our kids be successful.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the Coffs Harbour Golden Oldies Cricket Club travels the countryside to compete in tournaments, and they have plenty of fun along the way. They enjoyed the Queensland Winter Carnival at Mackay, an event which focuses on enjoying the game and mixing with cricket tragics from other States. The Coffs Harbour Golden Oldies meet at our Leisure Park nets during the week, with people nearing or who have reached the age of 60 welcome to attend and enjoy the camaraderie and exercise.

Some of the best athletes on two wheels called the Coffs Coast home recently when the Sawtell BMX Club hosted a round of the BMX NSW series, providing an annual injection of adrenalin to the local scene. The enthusiastic club members are enjoying the significant transformation of their Sawtell BMX track back into a premier sporting venue and top-class facility. The New South Wales Government Stronger Country Communities Fund allocated \$506,504 for improved lighting, track stabilisation and drainage works, as well as for construction of a new start hill incorporating an event management office. I say well done to all involved.

Young CrossFit athlete Jodi Stevens is another remarkable athlete providing a lift to her local sport and her local community. When she was nine she began CrossFit as a way to increase her fitness for a blossoming football career. Five years on, her footy boots are packed away and a barbell is firmly in her grip. Jodi has just become the under-14/15 Australian champion, beating girls from across the country in the CrossFit Games Open. Jodi has her sights set on next March when she will enter the online qualifiers for the CrossFit Games. I pay tribute to all our local sportsmen and sportswomen, the organisational leaders around them and their supportive parents and families.

#### **BOTTLES FOR THE BUSH INITIATIVE**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (18:00:01):** Often in the position we hold we feel we are not heard; the hustle and bustle of daily life takes over. In these times one great idea may be overlooked, but recently my faith in the process of government was restored. I am concerned, as we all are, about the drought. Many people have spoken to me and want to do more. How can the man in the street help? People just want to help but in many cases they are frustrated as to how they can make a real and immediate difference. I thought about how the average person could help without much effort. My idea was to turn over the charity part of the Return and Earn scheme to drought relief. I called the Minister for Energy and Environment to let him know my idea. He happily agreed, then immediately called TOMRA and worked through the process.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the "Bottles for the Bush" charity buttons on Return and Earn plastic bottle recycling machines will be turned over to drought relief charities from now and through Christmas. The hope is to raise \$250,000. I think we can do better than that. Let us all get behind Bottles for the Bush and see if our New South Wales communities can double or even triple that number. It is an easy way to do our bit for drought relief. Our farmers are facing the worst drought conditions and the most dangerous bushfires on record. My heart goes out to all families who have been deeply affected by either the drought or the raging bushfires. Some towns lost everything as the fires ripped through their communities, whereas others will have no water by Christmas. The current unfavourable conditions in Australia are putting immense pressure on rural communities. Therefore getting behind the Bottles for the Bush initiative is of utmost importance. Every empty drink container recycled will raise 10c for the Bottles for the Bush appeal; 20 containers will provide one litre of water; 200 containers will provide one standard hay bale; and 500 containers will provide food for a family. Please pledge your support and start collecting empty bottles today.

The Return and Earn scheme is the largest litter reduction initiative introduced in New South Wales. It has collected over two billion containers in just 19 months. Littering spoils the environment and costs millions of dollars to clean up. Therefore, this program is immensely beneficial to our bushland, waterways, streets and parks. New South Wales has a target to reduce litter by 40 per cent by 2020. We are on our way to that target and I look forward to us succeeding and reducing litter across the State. My wife put through the bottles we had collected over the last couple of weeks, selected the Bottles for the Bush button and donated \$45 to drought relief. That is how easy it is. In the electorate of Heathcote we have some of the most generous people. I know we can get behind this initiative and make a real difference to our country cousins.

Through my Rotary club I also came up with the "Adopt a Town" scheme, where city-based Rotary clubs adopt a drought-affected town. Once the initial contact is made with a Rotary club in the district a relationship is established. Our club recently returned from a long weekend at Blayney, our second visit. The club put on a

barbecue and picnic and invited farmers from outlying areas to take some time off, come into town and experience some friendship and fun for just a few hours. The kids received donated gifts and care packages were distributed to families. Other Rotary clubs have purchased fuel cards and local store cards, like IGA grocery cards, for their drought-affected towns. This small act of kindness makes a huge difference when they are faced with the day-to-day dust, drought and the death of their lifestyle. My wife and I are going to south-west New South Wales during Christmas and will spend some money in towns such as Temora, Cootamundra, Yass and some coastal towns. I encourage everyone to think of doing the same. The only thing that will change the drought is rain—let us pray that the rain comes soon.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:04:40):** I acknowledge the comments by my colleague about Return and Earn, which is a very successful litter reduction initiative that has surpassed the Premier's target. Although it is good for our environment, the feature of the initiative that is mentioned most often is the community aspect. As we heard, through the member's good efforts a contribution from a pseudo-metropolitan electorate has been made to our country cousins, who deserve all the support they are getting during this difficult time. I am sure many other members who have kiosks in their electorates will want to do the same. I commend the member for his efforts and send my best wishes to rural communities who are affected by the drought and bushfires.

### **BANKSTOWN LABOR PARTY BRANCH**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (18:05:54):** In light of the recent Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into the New South Wales Labor Party, I place on record a matter concerning the Labor Party at a local level at Bankstown. It relates to complaints that were duly made by me and another public official, which I have recently discovered were withheld by a party official who is no longer in office. ICAC is currently conducting an investigation into political donations to the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party, which I do not intend to comment further on; however, in light of the current proceedings, I believe it is important and in the public interest that these matters are placed on the record.

Political parties play a critically important role in the democratic process and in the institutions of government and in Parliament. It is therefore vital that there be transparency and public confidence in the way they conduct their affairs. In mid-2013 I had a series of conversations with the then General Secretary of the Labor Party to object to the legitimacy of a number of party membership applications that had been coordinated by an individual. No formal investigation was ever conducted. For a sustained period between 2013 and 2016 in Bankstown, a number of individuals were recruited to attend branch meetings for the sole purpose of signing the attendance book. Those individuals were not active or loyal party members and refused to assist the election of Labor candidates, instead they openly mocked endorsed nominees and representatives.

In early 2017, I again wrote to the then general secretary of the party, repeating these concerns and requesting that a formal investigation be conducted into this illegitimate recruitment by this specific individual. This request was ignored. Despite the influx of people joining and concerns and charges being made against these illegitimate branch members by me and another public official, no investigation was conducted. I made additional complaints in writing to the general secretary in 2017 regarding the nomination of the specific individual for preselection in the 2017 local government election, stating that the individual was not eligible for preselection under the party rules that state that a candidate must not be a property developer or a close associate of a property developer. Recently I was made aware that in late 2016 a female former public official brought charges against this individual through the party office for his intimidating and threatening behaviour. In a letter to the then general secretary dated 22 November 2016, the official wrote:

I wish to charge Mr Remy Wehbe .... with "bringing the Party into disrepute", "action or conduct contrary to the principles and solidarity of the Party", "disloyal or unworthy conduct", and "disruptive tactics (as per Rule A.33), following his consistent intimidatory behaviour at the Condell Park branch meetings. Over the course of the past two years, Mr Wehbe has been actively disrupting the orderly proceedings of the Condell Park branch meetings through his aggressive and intimidatory behaviour. This behaviour has resulted in many members feeling unsafe to attend meetings, female branch members being uncomfortable at meetings, and the orderly conduct of meetings being severely disrupted.

Mr Wehbe has pushed the Condell Park branch to the point of complete dysfunction and his conduct which is in breach of the party rules must be held to account. Mr Wehbe has consistently come to branch meetings with the sole intent of physically and verbally intimidating the branch executive and the State MP for Bankstown, bringing along individuals who are not loyal to the party but merely "standover men" to threaten, yell and intimidate—particularly the women in the room.

Mr Wehbe has directly incited other individuals, who he has organised to attend Condell Park meetings, to behave in an equally aggressive and disruptive manner.

I have personally been stood over and intimidated through aggression by Mr Wehbe, most recently at the Condell Park branch meeting held on Monday 25 May.

It is disgusting that these matters were never heard. Individuals such as this continue to bring my party into disrepute and I am disappointed to now hear that this former public official no longer wants to be a member of the Labor Party—unsurprisingly. This is particularly relevant with recent publicity and scrutiny. I refer to the

Victorian Labor president, Hutch Hussein, who has been calling for cultural change within the Labor Party. Ms Hussein has highlighted the level of sexual harassment and bullying culture that exist within the party in Victoria. I think it is important and worthy for us to consider those comments from Victoria in light of the review that is now taking place of the Labor Party. I welcome the change in the party office and I welcome a proper review into the Labor Party. I welcome change that encourages and supports women and the progression of women in the party, particularly in areas such as Bankstown. I highlight this for the sake of the former public official.

### MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE JOE WILLIAMS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:11:03):** I take this opportunity to talk about a topic which, although uncomfortable, is one that unfortunately would have impacted almost everybody in this place in some way. That topic is mental health and suicide. The reason I bring this up today is that a constituent from the Dubbo electorate was recently presented with a prestigious award for work he does to help people in his area. A lot of people would know the name Joe Williams and think of his days in the National Rugby League [NRL], where he made his name with the South Sydney Rabbitohs. But while the bright lights of first grade gave him a platform, he has well and truly made the most of that in a way that helps the whole community.

I mentioned that suicide is an uncomfortable topic and it rarely gets mentioned in the media for fear of glorifying it. But through the work of Joe's program, *The Enemy Within*, he is trying to normalise discussions about mental health issues. He tours Australia and the world telling his story and working with people to help them stay on top of their demons. As Joe says, "Nothing cures mental health issues but it is about managing them as best as possible and trying to avoid triggers." Joe's is a story that should resonate with all of us. Thankfully, he is more than happy to share it. I am sure he will not mind me discussing it in this forum today.

As an NRL star Joe Williams appeared to have the world at his feet, but behind closed doors he was battling in his own mind and trying to self-medicate. Unfortunately, his battles are far too common. When his NRL days were over he made his way to Dubbo to play football, and in 2011 he won the Bob Weir Medal as he led Dubbo CYMS to a grand final win over the Parkes Spacemen in group 11. The following year, despite everything he had achieved, his internal battle got the better of him. He wrote a letter to his children and attempted to take his own life. Thankfully, that attempt was unsuccessful.

Without anyone else knowing, his mind was telling him that he did not deserve to live and that his children, family and friends would be better off without him. It is a truly heartbreaking but unfortunately all too common story. But in those darkest of moments, Joe had a lightbulb moment. His failure to end his own life convinced him that he in fact did have a reason to be alive and he turned his attention to boxing and to mental health work. In the ring he won a world title, and he has been landing knockout blows as he attempts to help people who find themselves in the same position as he was. He said in an interview last year:

It was in that moment I said to myself: I am so thankful to be alive, and every day I get to open my eyes, I'm going to treat that as a gift. That attempt at taking his own life was the genesis for Joe to set up *The Enemy Within*, which is a program aimed at not only working with people who are battling mental health problems but also showing the wider community that mental illness should be treated no differently to physical illness. He also used his connection with his Indigenous heritage as a proud Wiradjuri man as a tool to help with his recovery. Writing his story was also therapeutic. His autobiography, *Defying the Enemy Within*, was published in 2018. It is a warts-and-all account of his battles, and in true Joe Williams style he tells things exactly how he sees them.

He says, "I do this stuff for a living, but obviously I can't tell every story every night in the talks I do with people". But he knows the content will help people. He says, "... but still the subject of suicide and mental health aren't easy for everyone to take in and understand." He goes on to say, "This book is the first time I've sat down and pieced together my whole story, and there's nothing held back. I write about the first time I remember having suicidal thoughts, being in the mental health ward for the first time when I was coaching CYMS. It's all in there. It needs to be spoken about because mental illness, like any illness, can hit anyone at any time, whether they're young or old."

In my former career as a broadcaster I got the chance to speak with Joe on air on a number of occasions, and it was obvious his work in suicide prevention was always going to take him places. Recently Joe Williams was named as the co-winner of the fourth annual Mental Health Prize alongside Christine Morgan, who in recent times has been appointed as the suicide prevention adviser to Prime Minister Scott Morrison. The award was presented by the Prime Minister himself just a few days after I bumped into Joe in Dubbo's main street, where he was meeting with other young Indigenous leaders and discussing issues relating to them. The award is justified recognition of the amazing work he has done that has seen him not only speak at events in Australia but also tour the world. He has taken his message to the United States and to top-level sporting clubs like AFL teams and the South Sydney Rabbitohs.

That work is done in conjunction with his fierce advocacy for the Indigenous communities not only in towns that he has lived in such as Dubbo, Wagga and Cowra but also across the country. I am lucky enough to

have a number of mental health and suicide prevention advocates in my electorate who are doing fantastic work in our communities, and Joe is one of those people whose work is literally saving lives. I take this opportunity to publicly congratulate Joe Williams on his award, and I look forward to seeing where he and The Enemy Within program go in the future.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (18:16:15):** I thank the member for Dubbo for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. Joe Williams was one of the most courageous players to take to the field. He was absolutely outstanding, but today the courage he is displaying off the field makes his on-field efforts pale into insignificance. It takes real bravery to speak out on the issues of mental illness and suicide prevention. Every year suicide is the biggest killer of women under 44 and men under 34. That is a shocking statistic. Joe Williams is using his profile and his identity to help others through a very difficult time. He helps them to get the support they need and he makes sure that they know that there is a path through. The message is: No matter how helpless, how hopeless, how dark or how ashamed you might be feeling, there is a way through. Joe's story should be an inspiration to everyone at this time.

#### MEN'S HEALTH

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (18:17:25):** Today International Men's Day will be celebrated in over 80 countries across the globe as it aims to highlight the positive value men bring to the world, families and communities through the Six Pillars of International Men's Day. The theme this year is "Making a difference for men and boys" which is quite fitting when you look at the positive changes men can make in their outlook and way of life to positively influence those around them, especially when it comes to children. The first pillar is to promote positive male role models, not just movie stars and sportsmen but everyday working-class men who are living decent and honest lives. The second pillar is to celebrate men's positive contributions to society, community, family, marriage, child care and the environment. The third pillar is to focus on men's health and wellbeing—social, emotional, physical and spiritual. The fourth pillar is to highlight discrimination against men in areas of social services, social attitudes and expectations and law. The fifth pillar is to improve gender relations and promote gender equality. The sixth pillar is to create a safer and better world where people can be safe and grow to reach their full potential.

It is abundantly clear that, as men, we all too often fall victim to personal and social pressures to behave in a certain way, whether it be to act tough when times get tough, to be strong and resilient or to act as though nothing ever bothers us. Clearly, we are all too often our own worst enemies. It is time men changed the way we think and got serious about finding an approach to resolve and nurture our own wellbeing—after all, we will be incapable of helping others if we cannot first help ourselves. This is the mantra taught by the fantastic blokes over at the Australian Man Cave Support Group, who have dedicated themselves to supporting their fellow man and helping one another through the good times and the bad. The Man Cavers are all about breaking through the barriers, eliminating the stigma and helping men open up and speak about their health and mental health—after all, the only way we can create a safer, better tomorrow for men and boys is to do what we can to work towards resolving our issues today.

In south-west Sydney we are fortunate to have a number of community groups working towards changing the name of the game and creating a safer, healthier community as they work towards tackling issues regarding men's health and reducing suicide rates not only now but for generations to come. Recently our community embraced the message being delivered by CORE Community Services, which hosted its first International Men's Day celebrations at the Barbara Street Community Centre in Fairfield. It is great to see more groups getting active and engaging at-risk men throughout our community who would normally keep to themselves and refuse any help being offered to them.

Men are finally opening up to the idea that—and I would like to quote a great man on this—"It is not weak to speak". The quote is from Lou Greco, President of the Australian Man Cave Support Group. I acknowledge the tireless dedication shown today by the guest of my colleague the member for Prospect, Mr Matthew Dillon, who is part of the Parkes Community Network in south-west Sydney. Matt is well known throughout our community for his tireless dedication and ongoing advocacy for the importance of men's health, not to mention the countless hours he has spent personally participating in information sessions, outreach programs and doing all he can to raise awareness regarding men's health throughout our community. I truly thank Matt for everything he has done. Our community is that much richer for his efforts. We all need to remember that it is not just the superheros or movie stars that kids look up to and mimic; it is the everyday Joes, the dads, the uncles, the neighbours down the road. We all need to set better examples for our future generations, so together we can build a better tomorrow and by improving ourselves and supporting those around us. I wish everybody a happy International Men's Day.

### TRIBUTE TO MURRAY GUEST

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (18:21:50):** When I am asked who inspired me as a youngster, I always answer that I was inspired by my schoolteachers. Every day these people walk into classrooms across our State with the sole intention of educating, encouraging and driving our young people to be the very best version of themselves now and into the future. Sadly, on Tuesday 29 October 2019 our Northern Tablelands region lost one of regional education's greatest champions—a friend, a colleague and a mentor to many and the thirteenth principal of The Armidale School, Mr Murray Guest. Murray tragically lost his life after the vehicle he was driving collided with a tree on the Waterfall Way east of Armidale.

My heart goes out Murray's wife, Joanne, and his children, Annelise and Harry, during this devastating time. For his entire tenure at The Armidale School, or TAS, they shared Murray with generations of boys, and more recently girls, and teachers and staff—all people, I know, he also considered to be part of his family. To me personally and many in the community it still does not quite feel real that this pillar of education in Armidale is no longer with us. At the time of his passing Murray had spent 21 years and three months at the helm of TAS, just six months shy of becoming the school's longest-serving headmaster and one of the most senior Great Public Schools [GPS] headmasters in the 125-year history of the school. He was a man who was incredibly inclusive and I have been told on many occasions his leadership style was one that empowered others to stand up, put forward their own ideas and always have their say.

For 125 years TAS has been providing quality private school education to Armidale and the broader region and in that time it has become an institution steeped in tradition. Until the start of 2016, TAS was well known for being an educator exclusively of boys; however, tasked with ensuring the future financial viability of the school, Murray spearheaded an effort to change almost 125 years of tradition and make the facility co-educational.

In April of 2015 it was announced, following a period of community consultation, that TAS would become co-ed by term one the following year. Like all big cultural changes to schools steeped in tradition, there was a little bit of pushback from traditionalists and old boys who wanted the status quo to remain, but in his casual and stoic way Murray dealt with those concerns by saying, "We're not looking to change the things we do but just to open things up." Today TAS boasts a school student population of 634 from transition through to year 12, with 250 of that number in the boarding school. Year on year the female student population is growing, with girls now making up 28 per cent of students—a great achievement which can be attributed to Murray's strong leadership and wanting to change the status quo for the benefit of the school in the long term.

While the majority of Murray's time at TAS was incredibly positive his tenure was not without some public struggles. Allegations of historical sexual abuse dating back to the 1960s were well documented publicly and it was Murray who committed to acknowledging that painful chapter in the school's past. His leadership, alongside the efforts of the board, resulted in the school joining the National Redress Scheme and the creation of a special reflection space on campus. Murray's caring nature earned him the trust of former students who had suffered abuse and he worked with them behind the scenes on redress. Those efforts earned him the respect not only of those affected but also of advocates for justice beyond the TAS community, many of whom have praised Murray for his leadership in this matter.

Obviously the last month has been a difficult time for the school and community. I really want to state for the record my acknowledgement of the work of the acting headmaster, Alan Jones, and chairman of the school board, Seb Hempel, for the work that has been done to support students and staff in their time of grief. In the days following the accident, the New South Wales Department of Education lent a hand to its private school colleagues and provided a number of specialist councillors at the school to support the students and staff. As I mentioned, this year marks the 125th anniversary of TAS and a number of special anniversary functions are planned for later this year. I am pleased to say that the school will forge ahead with these events, probably with even greater vigour than previously planned—just like Murray would have wanted. Personally I will greatly miss Murray's friendship, his professionalism, his advice and his expertise. Murray was a true leader—someone we could all aspire to be. Murray Guest, rest in peace.

### KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE CANCER SUPPORT SERVICES

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (18:27:03):** I acknowledge the fantastic support services available in Ku-ring-gai for the individuals and their families who are or have been impacted by cancer. Any diagnosis, despite the type, evokes a wide range of emotions such as fear, depression and helplessness. With all the uncertainties and, more importantly, loss of physical control, the need for emotional support services such as centres, face-to-face, helplines and email groups in our communities is vital. It allows patients, family members and even carers to voice their concerns in a safe environment.

According to the New South Wales Cancer Council, research has shown that people who take part in support groups similar to the ones at the Sydney Adventist Hospital—known as the San—in Wahroonga and the Prostate Cancer Support Group at the Royal North Shore in St Leonards have lower levels of anxiety and depression than people who do not take part. These groups offer a sense of belonging and empowerment and a place of relaxation in times of high stress. The San hospital in Wahroonga is home to the Cancer Support Centre, which is also linked to Jacaranda Lodge. Founded in 1993 they provide support services to everyone in our community.

The support centre offers a wide range of free support groups, counselling, resources and information. Jacaranda Lodge, which is located onsite at the San hospital, is a home away from home for those requiring low-cost accommodation and has an open courtyard and separate garden for meditation and relaxation. Movember is the month that raises awareness of men's health issues, including prostate cancer, which is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men and in the top three with breast and lung cancer. Although I am not growing a mo this year—but I know many who are—I wish to recognise the Prostate Cancer Support Group, who run their program out of Jacaranda Lodge.

It is a group that is open to all members of my community. Interested people do not have to be patients at the hospital to join. Meeting quarterly, patients, family members and carers are able to share their journeys, learn more about the disease and discuss different types of management. As we hear on television, read in the paper or are told by our doctor, prostate cancer is subtle and it is very easy for someone to go about their day unaware they may have it. This support group offers the emotional comfort for men who either are dealing with a current diagnosis or are survivors. Members have found it to be a rewarding experience.

It is important to note that many of these support services, which are readily accessible in Ku-ring-gai and throughout New South Wales, are only available due to fundraising events that are held by community groups such as sporting clubs, rotary clubs, individuals and corporates. For many of us, fundraising has become a part of our lives since an early age. At school we may have sold chocolates or biscuits if we were part of Scouts or Guides. Today we hold morning teas, golf days or wear-a-ribbon days and we go to nationwide events like the McGrath Foundation's Pink Cricket Test. Each year the San hospital holds the San Run For Life, with the proceeds going towards the cancer services that support our community. I know that the member for Hornsby, who is present in the Chamber, has participated in that event. The event was held in August this year and had around 800 participants who braved the winter morning. It was a great effort from all involved—the sponsors, volunteers and participants—and the hospital raised \$10,000.

More recently I was invited by Wahroonga resident Yvonne McMaster, OAM, to the Cancer Council's sixteenth Hornsby Relay For Life. This event attracts thousands of eager fundraisers. This year they had 38 teams, 445 participants and 78 survivors and carers. Hornsby Relay For Life is part of a worldwide movement to edge closer to a cancer-free future. As of last week they had raised \$80,000 and that number is only climbing to their target of \$90,000, with every dollar going towards support, research and advocacy work for patients both today and in the future.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the volunteers. It was great to see so many people in the community come together to support this cause. I look forward to attending next year. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in 2019 one in three men and one in four women will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 75. But diagnosis is just that. My father had bowel cancer at 58 but lived to a very healthy 92½ years of age. This emphasises why the Ku-ring-gai community offers such valuable services to cancer patients and their families. On behalf of the community, I thank all of the medical professionals, carers and supporters for providing world-class support to our family and friends who are dealing with cancer.

### **BRING BLACKSMITHS BACK**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:32:16):** Today I bring to the attention of the House the concerns of an organisation called Bring Blacksmiths Back, which is a community group comprising local surfers and other patrons of Blacksmiths Beach who are concerned about the erosion of sandbanks within the surf zone and the resulting loss of surfing amenity. In recent times Blacksmiths Beach has deteriorated with the loss of sand deposits leaving only a deepwater ocean bay with no surfing break. The sand depletion and drop in depth of the inshore seabed floor is difficult to identify because over some years it has taken place below the surface of the water.

Historically Blacksmiths has always been a very popular surfing beach in the Swansea electorate. Home to the Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club, which celebrated 90 years of service in 2017, and the Nine Mile Beach Surfboard Club, which has been around for more than 50 years, Blacksmiths has always been a great place to go to catch a wave. Indeed Blacksmiths has hosted the New South Wales Surf Life Saving Championships nine times and will host this season's championships in 2020. These large-scale surfing events represent a significant

injection into the local economy and give locals the chance to showcase our beautiful area to the rest of New South Wales.

But we know that coastal erosion is a problem right along the east coast of Australia, with man-made coastal infrastructure interfering with the natural processes of sand replenishment. Blacksmiths Beach is no different. The Bring Blacksmiths Back group has asked that the Government identify Blacksmiths Beach as a significant open coast location and work collaboratively with the Lake Macquarie City Council to develop a new coastal management program that reflects the ongoing challenges. Bring Blacksmiths Back has also joined my own calls for a permanent dredging solution for Swansea Channel, with the sand removed from the channel to be used for beach renourishment at Blacksmiths. This is a great example of locals working together to propose local solutions to local problems. I am sure those opposite are sick of hearing about the Swansea Channel because I am always talking about it. Likewise, I wish they would simply fund a permanent dredge so I too can talk about other things.

This is an opportunity for the Government to get on board with a solution and fix two birds with one stone. Previously the Government had infrastructure in place that could pump sand directly from the channel onto Blacksmiths Beach. However, in all its wisdom, it was removed. I ask that the infrastructure be reinstated and for the sand from the current dredging campaign to be used for the purpose of beach renourishment at Blacksmiths. Bring Blacksmiths Back has rightly pointed out that surfing is a great, affordable and accessible sport for people in our coastal communities. Though it has grown in popularity and is now a multibillion-dollar international industry at a professional level, it remains an affordable recreational activity for many people at a grassroots level.

Historically Blacksmiths Beach has been an ideal beach for learners. I have to admit to members I have had some surf lessons at Blacksmiths Beach myself—and I even stood up! But the continued depletion of sand and the lack of breaks at Blacksmiths means that it will no longer be the great local surfing spot that it once was and locals will have to go elsewhere or stop surfing altogether. It also jeopardises the future of the large-scale surfing carnivals that have been held at Blacksmiths for the best part of a decade and, in turn, the enormous economic benefits those events bring to local businesses in our community. It is entirely achievable for the sand from the channel to be used for Blacksmiths Beach. I ask the Government to consider this as a matter of urgency. I invite all members to visit Blacksmiths Beach and have a surf. They will have a great time.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Swansea for the kind invitation—if only I could surf.

#### HUNTERS HILL STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections) (18:36:38):** My constituents have spent the last few weeks admiring the tenacity of our emergency services. They have asked me to pay special thanks to those across the State who have put their lives on the line to defend Australian homes, families and stock for days on end. In 1905 Henry Lawson neatly summarised the difficulty of the Australian fire season. In *The Bush Fire* he wrote:

Ah, better the thud of the deadly gun, and the crash of the bursting shell,  
 Than the terrible silence where drought is fought out there in the western hell;  
 And better the rattle of rifles near, or the thunder on deck at sea,  
 Than the sound—most hellish of all to hear—of a fire where it should not be.

Yet the ominous threat of fire is met with intelligence and bravery. All our emergency services have come together to manage another devastating bushfire season and the Lane Cove electorate is tremendously grateful. Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the State Emergency Service [SES] Hunters Hill branch to assist with the presentation of awards for outstanding service and to recognise their extraordinary performance supporting our community in times of need. The unit is ably led by local commander Peter Dadd, unit commander Louise Bertoni, deputy unit commander Louise DeMarco and logistics officer Scott MacCue. The unit has served our electorate for 35 years, and over that time countless local families and individuals have turned to the volunteers in orange in their time of need. It is also where I met my wife.

The team removes fallen trees, covers sections of roofing that has blown away and mans call centres in emergencies. Whatever the issue is, the SES can be trusted to be there. Last week three Hunters Hill SES unit members were recipients of the National Medal, which recognises long and diligent service in organisations that protect life and property at some risk to members. The medal is awarded to persons for long service in an eligible organisation who fulfil the primary function and meet other criteria. To qualify for the medal, 15 years of eligible service is necessary.

I congratulate William Foxall, Paul Dadd and Sean Flanagan on receiving this prestigious award and thank them for their service. Furthermore, I congratulate Andrew Wood, who was a recipient of the NSW SES Long Service Medal, on 25 years of diligent service; Robert Preston, who received a 20 Year Long Service Award; Ian Dear, OAM, William Foxall, Paul Dadd and Sean Flanagan on their 15 Year Long Service Awards; and Gary Akehurst, a recipient of the Donald Oil Award for going above and beyond to keep the Hunters Hill unit running. The excellent volunteers in organisations such as the SES, coupled with our brilliant emergency services, keep Australians protected in this country, which is abundant in natural disasters. We thank them for their years of service and look forward to continuing to support them and working together into the future.

### DRUG POLICY

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:39:56):** I speak today to express my heartbreak at the number of young people across our State who have lost their lives at music festivals. My heart breaks for the families of Alex Ross-King, aged 19; Joshua Tam, aged 22; Nathan Tran, aged 18; Callum Brosnan, aged 19; Joseph Pham, aged 23; and Diana Nguyen, aged 21. These young people, many barely adults, all died after consuming what they thought was MDMA at music events between December 2017 and January this year. Each of their deaths may well have been prevented if they had known more about the pills they were taking. They did not have all the information at hand when making these fatal choices, and the worst thing is that more information was possible. However, the response of this Government has been to stick its fingers in its ears and refuse to admit that its current strategy is not working.

The reality is that young people are going to take drugs. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and pretend that it is not going to happen, because it does. Like it does so often, this Government has turned this debate into one of moral recourse. It thinks that young people can be shamed out of taking drugs. The treatment for this problem is scientific. Knowledge is power when it comes to making decisions around drug taking and those of us on this side of the House would like to see science and knowledge prevail. More than 10 per cent of Australians have used MDMA in their lives and the number is significantly higher among young people. As much as we all hate to admit it, this is the reality that the Government must come to terms with. That is why the Leader of the Opposition, Jodi McKay, and Labor have committed to a limited trial of pill testing to determine whether it succeeds in harm minimisation, as per the recommendations of the coronial inquest. I ask the Premier: Why will your Government not do the same?

When there is a chance to bring the experts together it is important that we listen and consider their recommendations. NSW Labor is guided by the experts and the evidence in drafting policies. We can help save young people's lives. A New South Wales Labor Government will convene a drug summit as a top priority. In 1999 the last drug summit in New South Wales was held by the then Labor Premier Bob Carr. Among other reforms, the summit led to the establishment of the medically supervised injecting centre [MSIC] in Kings Cross. Since the creation of the MSIC it has handled more than 6,000 drug overdoses without a single fatality and made more than 12,000 referrals to external health and social welfare services.

A NSW Labor drug summit would gather police, the legal system, clinicians, academics, family members, former users and other experts together to consider and advise on a wide variety of issues, including drug use and addiction, social services for those suffering from addiction and police practices such as sniffer dogs and strip searches. We owe it to the public to find the best solutions, rather than pretending the problems do not exist. It is also time for a well overdue and serious discussion around the use of strip searching as a method available to police in New South Wales. The recent report by the University of New South Wales Faculty of Law revealed that the number of strip searches has increased by almost 50 per cent in four years and that they are often being undertaken without the legal criteria being met. Strip searches may only be undertaken on the grounds that "a strip search is necessary for the purpose of the search, and that serious and urgent circumstances make it necessary". The report found that that criteria is often not being met.

In addition, the report found that children were often being subjected to strip searches. Information obtained by the Redfern Legal Centre revealed that, since 2016, 122 girls have been strip searched, including two 12-year-olds and eight 13-year-olds. Young women are being asked take off all their clothing, squat and cough. Some are even being asked to remove tampons during menstruation. That is not okay. This Government is once again condoning the scourge of immorality and a fear of authority to address a societal problem. It is clear that the Government's approach to drug use and drug detection does not work. It is our job as the local representatives and lawmakers of this State to listen to the experts and put together an evidence-based approach to drug use and drug detection in New South Wales.

A New South Wales Labor government would ensure that best practice and safety rather than political dogma define policy regarding protecting lives, while also ensuring people's dignity, safety and security. I call on the Government to step up to the plate and go in to bat for young people, not put lives at stake to win a moral

argument that the majority of people have already decided has been lost. Listen to the experts and make the changes, and together we can hopefully save some lives.

### HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (18:44:49):** Today I recognise several hardworking organisations that I had the pleasure to visit on 8 November with the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Mr Gareth Ward. Minister Ward and I were invited by the St Vincent de Paul Society to visit 48 new units built in Campbelltown. The St Vincent de Paul Society is a great organisation that is truly helping to alleviate people's housing troubles with affordable housing. The construction of these new homes was made possible by the groundbreaking \$1.1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund [SAHF].

The St Vincent de Paul housing program has developed these properties, which form part of a portfolio of 500 that it is building across New South Wales under the SAHF. The organisation will also provide tailored support services for tenants, including training, employment and health-related assistance. The 48-unit development includes a range of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments that are close to schools, shops and public transport. Amenities include barbecue facilities, a communal outdoor area and underground parking. These 48 homes were filled straight away.

The day after they opened they were literally filled with residents who are appreciative and incredibly proud of their new homes, and we were very grateful to be invited by some of the residents to look around their homes. Talking to each of them and hearing their stories was very interesting. Many residents had previously experienced rough living conditions—some had been homeless and some lived in their car—so it was great to see the difference that this is making to them. The development is an example of the New South Wales Government's commitment to social and affordable housing. The progress in social and affordable housing that we are experiencing is obviously accomplished by strong economic management, which is only possible under the New South Wales Liberal Government.

The next location that Minister Ward and I visited was Holsworthy High School where we attended the Remembrance Day service, which is held a few days early so that defence personnel and their families can attend the school service as well as one on 11 November. Obviously in a defence community it is important to be able to do both. Attending this service allowed the Minister to meet Mr Reginald Chard. Mr Chard is the last remaining World War II veteran of the Kokoda campaign—and he is an absolute character. Mr Chard has been greatly assisted by the Holsworthy High School volunteer group, who dedicate their time to helping a number of different groups in the community.

Their volunteer work with Mr Chard involves the cleaning and maintenance of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, which is in Concord. They head out there and do tedious work, getting in the creek and cleaning rocks by hand. They truly do get their hands dirty and they make a real difference. Mr Chard praised them for their work. We have strong defence ties, so we see the benefit of looking after those memorials and the benefit of volunteering as well. It is great work that they do and it was nice to hear Mr Chard acknowledge the work they do.

The meeting was a great chance for students to hear Minister Ward speak about the importance of volunteering in the community. The Minister was also able to hear from the students about how they find volunteering to be a valuable and rewarding experience. As the Minister for volunteering it was great of him to be there for that. I was also happy to see so many young people in my electorate showing so much initiative by contributing their time to better our society. Seeing these young volunteers reassured me that our community will be in safe hands for many generations to come.

After Holsworthy High School, Minister Ward and I hit the road again and arrived at the Autism Advisory and Support Service in Liverpool—one of my favourite groups and one that I have talked about many times in this place. There we met Grace Fava, the founder and CEO of the Autism Advisory and Support Service. I was delighted to inform Minister Ward of all the hard work Ms Fava has done for our community, which he was very pleased to hear. Ms Fava gave us a tour of the facility. The Minister and I both enjoyed the toy shop—I had never been in that shop before but I think I will be doing my Christmas shopping there. We also enjoyed hearing about the work Ms Fava does to help people, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, with barriers they have with the NDIS.

Minister Ward and I then went on our last visit, which was to the Young Adults Disabled Association [YADA], located in Liverpool—another of my favourite groups. We met with the co-ordinator, Buffy McDonald. YADA started over 20 years ago. It provides social support and activities for people with disabilities in the Liverpool and Fairfield local government areas. Minister Ward was obviously very impressed with YADA and was happy to see such a strong passion in our community for helping those with disabilities. YADA is going

through a bit of change at the moment. It used to get a lot of its funding through a recycling program. The council has just shut that program down, which is an incredible disappointment, so now the association has to increase its fundraising to support people with disabilities. It was great to visit these organisations with Minister Ward. Working with him as his Parliamentary Secretary has been extremely rewarding. I feel that we are accomplishing a lot and also getting a lot done for my local community. It was great to show off the Holsworthy electorate and spend time with the Minister.

### MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:49:56):** This evening I make a contribution on a very important matter, that being men's mental health. According to Beyond Blue, on average, one in eight men will experience depression and one in five men will experience anxiety at some stage of their life. Beyond Blue goes on to say that blokes make up an average of six out of every eight suicides every single day in Australia, and the number of men who die by suicide in Australia every year is nearly double the national road toll. What Beyond Blue also explains, as do many other mental health organisations and peak bodies, is that there is a direct and important relationship between physical activity and improved mental health and mental resilience.

Medical studies demonstrate that spending 30 minutes running is enough to lift the mood of someone suffering from major depressive disorder and, no matter what the pace, the act of moving in itself has positive effects, adding to the already significant body of research which shows that running and other forms of exercise can improve mood and help fight depression. Beyond Blue suggests that the building of mental resilience and self-care focuses on two important actions—one being to stay healthy and the second being to stay connected. It gives me great pleasure to bring to the attention of members in this place the Vipers Running Club of Manly, which is a men's only running club of which I am a proud member.

We run every Thursday evening. The group was founded by Olly Woolrych and Matt Abel. They are supported by a fantastic group including Hayden Quinn, Kendrick Louis, Aleks Zids, Alex Bate, Matt Bate, Dave Kennett, Michael Silsby, Ant Elliott, James Want, Kevin Batt, James Ware, Richard Kerrigan, Scotty O'Brien, Benny Foster, Jaymz Hingerty, Lewis Collins, Ravi Rudner and a host of other gentlemen who join us every Thursday night to go for a run around Manly and North Head. There is a body of research that demonstrates a direct relationship between running and improved stress management, a calmer state of mind, the boosting of brain power, organising of one's thoughts, increased productivity and greater creativity—although that could be a point of contention amongst some members of the running club.

Manly is a beautiful place in which to enjoy some physical exercise and I pay tribute to Olly and Matt who, off their own bat, took the initiative to form the Vipers Running Club a little under a year ago. At the moment they are raising money for Movember, and there are some truly horrible attempts at moustaches. They are doing their best to raise some important funds and generally be a group of good men who live in the electorate of Manly that have understood the importance of staying connected with one another and participating in physical exercise like running—some doing it incredibly well and others, like me, holding up the back end of the pack. It is a real tribute to two gentlemen who got up on their own and decided to make an impact. It has grown into something they can be quite proud of; equally I am proud to be a member of the Vipers Running Club.

### DOONSIDE RAILWAY STATION

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (18:53:49):** I have received several comments from residents who attended the debate in Parliament last Thursday on the petition signed by more than 10,000 persons. All have expressed various emotions, from disappointment through to outrage, at the lack of Government members present to hear the debate as well as at the Government's response. Eighty people took time out of their valuable schedule to travel to Parliament from the outer western suburbs to attend a Thursday afternoon debate and then return home in peak hour. Over 10,000 petitioners, closer to 11,000, signed the petition on a suburban station upgrade, which was a herculean effort, and our residents expected more than just a half a dozen Government MPs to turn up to listen to or participate in the debate.

I also express my appreciation for the vast majority of Labor members who were present in the debate. The speakers from the Labor Party included the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Strathfield, who reaffirmed Labor's promise to build the lifts at Doonside. Chris Minns, the shadow Minister for Transport and member for Kogarah, spoke in the debate, clearly outlining the political manipulation and the selection bias of this Government over the bureaucracy-determined list based on its criteria. Mr Minns quoted the Auditor General saying that Clarendon station had consistently had one of the lowest scores of all Sydney train stations but that the Liberals have upgraded it. The Government spokespeople—members representing the electorates of Miranda, Oatley and Bathurst—were all singing from the same song sheet.

I can characterise the Government's response in two main themes. First, its failure to focus on Doonside. With close to 11,000 petitioners and with 80 people in the public gallery, the member for Miranda mentioned Doonside by name twice, the member for Oatley mentioned Doonside three times and the member for Bathurst, representing the Minister, could not even bring himself to mention Doonside once. What is worse is that, between them, the member for Oatley and the member for Miranda mentioned 33 different stations, and that the member for Bathurst, acting on behalf of the transport Minister, did not mention one single station; he just spoke about generic concepts. Narwee station was mentioned almost as many times as Doonside. This is a massive slap in the face for the residents of Doonside. Many people worked many long hours, giving up their time to gather the signatures, and the Government barely makes any direct reference to Doonside and why Doonside did not fit the criteria.

The second theme was the Government propaganda. The three Government speakers all spoke from the same song sheet and spoke about the \$2 billion program, the 470 station upgrades and the 58 stations with accessible upgrades including lifts, which have made 90 per cent of the stations accessible. How are the people of Doonside supposed to feel any better with that generic response? The Government has moved Doonside from the top of the list and being funded in 2012 to now being ranked in the bottom 10 per cent and no funding in sight. Every criterion is satisfied, yet the Liberal and The Nationals members of Parliament are either complicit in ripping off money from areas in need and reallocating it to themselves or they are just incompetent in understanding what is happening in the area. Either way, this Government stands condemned for its actions in putting politics ahead of people.

Once again I thank everyone who participated in gathering the signatures and those who made their way to Parliament to hear the debate last Thursday. Even though there was no answer given by the Government as to why Doonside lifts will not be built, the campaign continues. Labor has promised to build the lifts and it is now time for the Liberal Government to be here for the good governance of the State rather than just doing backroom deals and using government money as some slush account to push its private agenda. The Government should give Doonie a lift and it should do it now.

#### **COOTAMUNDRA ELECTORATE MEN'S SHEDS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:58:31):** It has been famously said that the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members. During a time when everyone is feeling the effects of drought and fires so acutely, those words have never been more apt. In the Cootamundra electorate in particular there are so many community members who embody the "bush spirit". Casting aside their own personal battles, residents of the Cootamundra electorate are proudly supporting men by promoting the importance of men's health. If you take a walk down the main street of any town—be it Junee, Cowra or Coolamon—you will notice that Movember is well and truly in full swing. Our fathers, brothers, uncles and friends are getting on board to support a charity that is changing the face of men's health, not only in Australia but also across the world, and for good reason.

By 2030, Movember aims to reduce the number of men dying prematurely by 25 per cent. It does not stop with the men though; many women now take part as well. Our "Mo-Sistas" have committed to staying active throughout November, carrying out fundraising for the cause, all while rallying the men in their lives to also join in. But the efforts to support men's health go much further than that across the Cootamundra electorate. We have a number of men's sheds across the region, which provide members with the opportunity to meet new friends while taking part in a number of constructive activities, which benefits mental health and wellbeing. Only recently, I had the chance to visit again the Cootamundra Men's Shed, which has 34 members. It was fantastic to speak with some of the men and it only reaffirmed just how important these organisations are to the community. I give a huge shout-out to the members of the Cootamundra Men's Shed.

Though the benefits are widely known, men's sheds give purpose to those who are seeking it, while giving back to the towns in which they are located. It is vital that we continue to promote men's sheds. As stated by the Australian Men's Shed Association Executive Officer, above all else, men's sheds help to save lives. That is just one of the reasons I am so proud to be part of this Government, which recognises the significance of these organisations. Under the Stronger Communities Fund, an initiative of the New South Wales Government, I had the opportunity to announce \$100,000 funding for the Cootamundra Men's Shed. This will allow the organisation to expand and relocate to new premises equipped with a kitchen and meeting rooms as well as updated wood and metalwork areas.

This year I also had the chance to pay a visit to the West Wyalong Men's Shed, where I had the privilege to let it know some much-needed funding was also on the way. After lobbying, I was able to secure \$9,000 through the ageing Minister to install solar panels at the shed—an incredibly worthy project that will help them manage ongoing electricity costs. I have also secured funding for men's sheds in Young, Cowra and Ariah Park. By

supporting the men's sheds, we are allowing these groups to continue to provide opportunities for men—young and old—to share their skills and to build those important connections.

During these tougher times it is imperative for people to have a place to turn to for support. Men's sheds offer just that, while also playing a pivotal role in helping to beat social isolation. But it is important to recognise that the mental health and wellbeing of men and women is everyone's responsibility. It is up to all of us as parents, family members and friends to be there for the ones we love and to support those who are most in need. Over the past couple of weeks we have seen an uprising of community support to rally around those who are suffering, be it through donations, volunteering or lending an ear. As a society, I encourage us to continue on this trajectory and to provide support to the initiatives that are so beneficial to our communities, be it Movember or our local men's shed.

### ON DEMAND BUS SERVICES

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (19:03:20):** I place on the record my disappointment at the conclusion of the on demand bus trial in the Sutherland Shire on 17 November. Trialling on demand buses in the Sutherland Shire was about personalising the transport experience for local residents. We know that people want to manage their own time and become less reliant on timetables, which is why on demand public transport services are designed to arrive when and where people need them most. Furthermore, by coming right to the customer's front door and delivering them to their desired hub—whether it be for transport, hospitals, schools or even Westfield—the on demand bus trial empowered many local residents, providing a new-found mobility and independence. Over the past two years my community has shared many stories with me about the difference the on demand bus trial has made to so many lives. Anthony has found the service life-changing following an accident, traumatic brain injury and subsequent legal blindness. Anthony has written that the service allows him to remain an integral part of his family. He said:

I regularly use the service to pick up my son from school, [and] take him to swimming lessons ... The service also allows me to attend my ongoing doctors' appointments and home again. I also use it to visit my family members and to go shopping. The Transdev On Demand Service has positively affected me to such an extent that I regularly tell people that the service 'has changed my life' and I sincerely mean this.

Similarly, Syd and Judith are a retired elderly couple who utilised the on demand bus trial as it serviced a gap in the existing public transport network. They said:

We manage OK with one car except when doctors' appointments or my chemo treatment conflicts with other appointments ... Unfortunately Sylvania Waters has no public transport and we have found this bus service to be extremely helpful. At our age and lifestyle we do not want to invest in a second car and using a taxi or uber is too expensive on a regular basis.

And then there is Dionyssia, who has commented about the detrimental impact on her independence and mobility. She stated:

I have only very recently begun to use the On Demand service as an alternative way to dealing with my complete distrust of the regular buses, in an effort to begin to regain my independence and mobility - and I have found this service to be invaluable for people of my age and ailments. The bus drivers have treated me with great care, understanding and patience. They also help passengers on and off the bus as they need it. Stopping the On Demand service will now mean that at 84, I will become house bound, relying on family to take me out.

On demand transport is undoubtedly the way of the future. The Sutherland Shire on demand trial was conducted in parallel with the existing services and was designed to complement the existing transport network. It is important that these trials are conducted to help us learn more about the needs of customers. I am informed by Transport for NSW that it has learned a great deal after operating the maximum pilot term of 24 months. Since we are looking to learnings, I put on record the most frequent complaint about this service: Transdev's booking system simply did not work. Transdev's technological shortcomings often prevented potential passengers from booking a ride.

The following words from constituents will speak from themselves. Anita said that the app was, "Utterly useless when it rejects your booking but doesn't tell you. Couldn't choose a hub the first time I tried either. Deleted the app and will never bother again." Tim had a similar experience, stating that the booking system was, "Useless. Says select a hub on the map. The blue dot is my location, no hubs?" Greg considers the app to have dramatically impacted on patronage statistics, stating that, "The Booking App frequently rejects a trip requested in a busy period and the system doesn't advise what other times are available. Rather, it invites the user to attempt a booking at another time. In my experience further booking attempts around my travel time in a busy period are almost always rejected." There is clearly a theme; Transdev failed to deliver a product that could adequately book local residents onto the service repeatedly over 24 months.

In addition, there was poor promotion of the service. Our community deserves so much better. Furthermore, this is not an isolated failure. The Manly on demand bus trial also delivered by Transdev had similar technological failings and also ceased earlier this year. I share my community's frustration over the service's

cancellation and note the significant benefits it can provide when it works correctly. It is my hope that when the re-tendering of the local bus franchise is done that an on demand service is included and that the provider does not merely pay lip-service to delivering it.

### **MEN'S HEALTH**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:08:03):** Today is International Men's Day, a day dedicated to improving health outcomes for men. In western Sydney, the Parks Community Network Inc. works to address men's health issues in the local area by raising awareness and advocating for policy that helps men address health issues. I have asked members in the Parliament of New South Wales here today to wear the blue and white bowtie ribbon to help raise awareness for men's health issues and to stand with those who are suffering from these health issues. The ribbons are part of the Let's Turn the Tide campaign that the Parks Community Network is running to addresses men's health issues with a focus on engagement at a local community level.

Men's health issues cause thousands of deaths a year with the Fairfield local government area and surrounding areas in western Sydney having a disproportionately high rate of preventable deaths of men. The Parks Community Network works to address men's health issues in the Fairfield area by raising awareness and advocating for policy that helps men address their health issues. Men's mental health is an area of particular concern. On average, six men die from suicide per day across Australia. We must work as a community to combat the stigma around mental health issues in men and ensure that treatment is available in our local communities.

I recently spoke with Mathew Dillon from the Parks Community Network Inc. He has worked with men from all backgrounds in the western Sydney community to improve health outcomes. Mr Dillon believes that men from multicultural backgrounds face particular challenges in accessing mental health services. These men have to overcome a huge amount of stigma to access services. Therefore, it is important for men to be able to access these services in our communities and for health services to be proactively reaching out to community members to ensure that they know the services that are available. With community outreach from local health groups, we can reduce the stigma around mental health issues and ensure that those who need access can receive access. Beyond mental health issues, men also have a tendency to delay accessing health services which can have major and harmful effects such as delaying the treatment of diseases. When our community members do not seek assistance in a timely manner, it causes an increase in death rates and delays recovery.

We must work with our community organisations to ensure that men access medical professional advice in a timely manner to improve health outcomes. While these issues are prevalent throughout Australia, in western Sydney these issues are more pronounced. The electorate of Prospect and neighbouring electorates have some particularly significant issues impacting upon our community. The area has one of the highest levels of gambling in the country. It has an above average unemployment rate and one of the highest levels of poverty in the country. These issues have led to a higher mortality rate in the Fairfield local government area. Mr Dillon raised several very concerning statistics with me. The rate of avoidable male deaths in the Fairfield local government area is currently 275.2 deaths per 100,000 people. This is similar throughout western and south-western Sydney with the South Western Sydney Local Health District having the highest rate of avoidable deaths in Sydney.

There are a number of organisations working to improve men's health outcomes. These local initiatives focus on getting men to open up and discuss issues that are affecting them. By creating environments such as men's sheds where men can feel comfortable discussing issues around physical health and mental health, community outcomes can be improved. It is important that locally led initiatives such as this are appropriately funded by both the State Government and Federal Government to ensure that men are able to feel comfortable accessing services in their community.

These initiatives are particularly important for men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who often do not have access to the same level of services and may feel a greater stigma in attempting to access mental health and physical health services. On International Men's Day it is important that we all commit to work towards ensuring that all men have access to the health services that they require and can access them without feeling stigmatised. We must ensure that these services are properly funded so that those seeking help can receive it in a timely manner. Together with our community partners, we can turn the tide on men's physical and mental health issues.

### **MULGOA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY LEADERS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:13:13):** I address the House to give my final private members' statement for this year and pay tribute to many community leaders who contribute so much to my community of Mulgoa. I begin with a special mention of Reverend John Lavender and his wife, Karen, who have announced their retirement after 25 years at Glenmore Park Anglican Church. John and Karen have been dedicated to the people of Glenmore Park and have done so much for the community over all these years, including supporting all

ages and stages of life within the Glenmore Park community. I thank them for their service and pray they rest up in readiness for the next adventure.

Community champion Wayne Wilmington—or, as he's known by locals, Mr Luddenham—is a strong advocate for Luddenham. As Western Sydney International and surrounding aerotropolis take shape, he has been vital in ensuring the voices of Luddenham are heard in this once-in-a-generation development. To Jane McLuckie, President of the Wallacia Progress Association, and her dedicated committee: we had a tough battle to fight against the Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria Trust, who desire to turn our Wallacia Golf Club into a cemetery. While we won the first battle at the Information and Privacy Commission, we continue to fight for the right outcome to be achieved—the preservation of Wallacia Golf Club. Thank you to the Wallacia Mulgoa Valley Rotary for its tireless advocacy in fighting this proposal for a cemetery. Thank you for fighting to ensure recreational and social opportunities exist in this important part of the Penrith local government area.

I congratulate the wonderful men at the St Clair and District's Men's Shed and for their amazing work, which is shown by the growth in the group over this last year. I also congratulate them on receiving a My Community Project to enable stage 2 of the shed to be realised. This is an exciting time after so many years of fundraising and working to receive development approval. Thank you as well to all the school principals across the electorate for everything they do for our community. Some principals and headmasters are long-term champions of their school community while others have just been appointed this year. Regardless of their tenure, their dedication, leadership of the school community and commitment to seeing all students become their personal best is to be acknowledged and thanked. Congratulations to all the students who just completed the HSC or their International Baccalaureate. Congratulations to all our incoming year 12 student leaders.

I also make special mention of our amazing Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers across the electorate, who have been fighting unprecedented fires across New South Wales. I thank the RFS crews of Regentville, Mulgoa, Wallacia and Erskine Park for keeping our communities safe, informed and protected in these conditions. I also thank the Regentville Fire and Rescue NSW, as well as the training academy in Erskine Park, and all the emergency services and government agencies who have been battling these horrific fires. They are the true heroes of our community.

Well, 2019 has been a huge year. In March we had an historic election win, which saw the New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals returned to government for a third term. I felt incredibly humbled and proud to have been asked for a third time to stand for the good people of Mulgoa and fight to make sure we get our fair share. I look forward to continuing to deliver for the people of Mulgoa, in particular delivering the commitments we made during the election: Glenmore Park Performing Arts and Learning Centre; Mamre Road, \$240 million; plus \$20 million Roper Road M4 on-ramp; Mulgoa Road \$260 million upgrade; a Service NSW centre in Glenmore Park; and a new primary school for Glenmore Park at Mulgoa Rise.

So much is happening across the electorate. I look forward to seeing many things in the community delivered, including Glenmore Park improvements to sporting fields and continuing to hear from families who have saved money through the Cost of Living initiative at Service NSW; the redevelopment of Mark Leece field amenity block, together with Penrith City Council, which will benefit St Clair United Football and St Clair Netball; the expansion of Cecil Hills public and high schools; the rezoning of industrial land to bring employment opportunities to western Sydney; the opening of Health One in St Clair and Orchard Hills, which will provide more community healthcare; and more children involved in physical activity like Colyton St Clair Little Athletics Centre, which reported a 10 per cent increase in registrations, thanks to the Active Kids rebate.

On a personal note, it is not often that as parliamentarians we debate matters of moral, ethical and complex significance in conscience votes. This year during debate on the Abortion Law Reform Bill 2019 I was incredibly honoured to have championed and fought for amendments to this bill, which has delivered a safer and more humane bill for doctors, women and the babies they carry. To everyone involved in this debate both inside and outside this place, I thank you for your contribution to achieving these important safeguards. Thank you to my fabulous, dedicated, hard-working and loyal staff members—Angela Maltese, Katheryne Bratusa, Jordan Briffa, Councillor Brian Cartwright and Meagan Skinner. I could not do what I do in this place on behalf of my community if they did not hold the fort in the electorate office.

I say a final thank you to my family, who support me, enable me and release me to be the member for Mulgoa, especially during evenings and weekends. A special thanks to my parents and mother-in-law, who care for Harry and help with the school pick up of Laura from time to time. A huge thanks to my husband, Mark, who carries the load of the household when I am in this place, including putting on loads of washing and emptying the dishwasher. He is also a strategic, political brain who gives great advice and input—albeit perhaps a little too often—but that is okay; it is all very well received.

I extend my thanks and appreciation of the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, for their leadership of our team and the transformative agenda they are delivering for our State. To my colleagues in this place and the Parliament of New South Wales staff, I thank them for their contributions, dedication and service not only to the Parliament but also to the people of New South Wales. I thank all members for their contributions in this House but also in their electorates. I wish everyone a very happy and safe Christmas. I hope they come to know the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ at this time and the transformative message that he brings of love and hope. I wish everyone a safe, prosperous and peaceful new year.

### KOGARAH ELECTORATE CLEARWAYS

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Greg Piper):** As I call the member for Kogarah, I welcome his children Joe, George and Nicholas, who are in the gallery.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (19:20:38):** I oppose the Government's decision to destroy local businesses and jobs in my electorate. I am talking about the Liberal-Nationals Government's decision to put clearways on Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road at Bexley. The proposed clearway hours are 6.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. on weekdays and 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on weekends and public holidays. These clearways will have a devastating impact on local businesses by lowering customer numbers. As every local member knows, local residents and their patronage are the life blood of local shops operating in commercial strips. But if local shoppers have nowhere to park, they will go elsewhere. As a result many Bexley shops may be forced to close or potentially lay off their staff. The entire Bexley community will be worse off as residents will be forced to travel to Hurstville or Kogarah to obtain services that are currently available in their local area.

Residents already complain about parking at Bexley shops and the clearways will exacerbate this parking shortage. Residents who live along Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road will no longer be able to park in front of their homes due to the clearways. I have started a petition in the area so that locals can demonstrate their opposition and anger at this decision, and I encourage every local in solidarity to sign it as a way of showing the Government it has got it wrong on this issue. Following the completion of the M5 East, Bexley shop owners have been building up their businesses, winning new customers and providing a much-needed commercial service to local residents. This clearway proposal will crush their hopes, and reverse the hard work of each and every one of them, to achieve an increase in economic activity along this strip.

Here we see the true colours of the Berejiklian Government in this instance: small businesses and working families will suffer unless this decision is reversed. I thank all members of the Bexley Chamber of Commerce, in particular, its president, Jeff Tullock, for their efforts to stop this clearway. I urge all members, even from the Coalition who have gone through similar issues associated with clearways in their electorates, to join me in rising up against the Minister for Transport and Roads. We could do this with a bipartisan effort to take on the Minister. Most importantly, I urge the Minister to reverse this decision so that the people and businesses of Bexley can get back to doing what they do best: working hard, raising their families and contributing to our wonderful community.

### ARNDELL ANGLICAN COLLEGE RFS CADET PROGRAM

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:23:29):** It is my pleasure to update the House of my attendance on the 18 October 2019 at Arndell Anglican College, where I presented 21 students with graduate certificates for the NSW Rural Fire Service Secondary School Cadet Program. I congratulate each student for this wonderful achievement. The students were required to take part in both practical and theory assessments and be deemed competent by the program coordinator. Successful completion of the program is therefore a testament to their commitment and hard work. The cadet program, which is open to year 9 students, is designed to teach cadets skills such as basic firefighting skills, appreciation of community and volunteer spirit, appreciation of the role of emergency services and appreciation of fire behaviour and safety as well as confidence, teamwork, leadership and initiative. The qualities developed and acquired from the program are useful for the future of the cadets, whether it is in work, study or service within the Rural Fire Service or any other organisation.

Past cadets have spoken highly of the program. One of them, James Petty, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service Cadet of the Year, stated, "I have had so much fun with the New South Wales RFS and have learnt a lot about teamwork and taking responsibility." Judging by the character of the cadets at Arndell Anglican College's presentation, I am sure such sentiments are widely shared. The Hawkesbury community is extremely grateful for the efforts of our cadet graduates. Locals are aware of our significant fire history and the significant threat fires pose to our lives, properties and livestock. With Wollemi National Park in the Hawkesbury on a watch and alert level as I speak, RFS volunteers are out there right now. The rough terrain, which restricts the movement of firefighters and often requires access by foot and in some cases by helicopter in the more remote parts of our area, has meant that firefighters have been tested in these fires.

We are also extremely grateful for the work of the NSW Rural Fire Service and each of its 73,000 hardworking, professional and dedicated volunteers in communities right across Australia. Cadets play an important role in continuing the tradition of the largest volunteer firefighting force in the world. Our RFS members are often faced with difficult and challenging situations and have to work in uncomfortable, unforgiving circumstances. Volunteers have been protecting local communities from bush and grass fires for more than 100 years. The New South Wales RFS volunteers perform a wide variety of roles and attend a range of emergencies. As well, they provide assistance at other events such as floods, storms and searches. The New South Wales RFS also aims to reduce the impact of bushfires by reducing hazards and educating the community about fire prevention and precautions.

I thank the 27 volunteers and staff from the New South Wales Hawkesbury district who assisted with the delivery of the secondary school cadet program, under the direction of Deputy Group Captain Phil Hurst. I also thank the staff at Arndell Anglican College, led by Principal Dr Gareth Leechman and cadet co-ordinator Mr Michael Refalo, for their support and supervision of the program, as well as all parents and carers for allowing their children to take part. I wish the cadets continued success and hope that they use their skills in all avenues of life. I know they would be made welcome by the RFS mentors should they decide to become regular Rural Fire Service volunteers.

### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:27:42):** With over 60 years of evidence, it is time for this Government to invest in a real, inclusive education policy. It is time to identify our community champions in inclusive disability leadership in schools and not only praise their work but also provide them with the resources they need. We need to provide real support for those school leaders who are taking the big steps forward toward successful inclusion. The Department of Education must be provided with extensive budgetary support to provide ongoing training to teachers across New South Wales who are ready to make those real adjustments towards inclusion in their classrooms. It cannot just be top down, added levels of bureaucratic paperwork listing kids with disabilities and adjustments.

Teachers need the time and the skills to fully include kids with diverse needs in our classrooms across New South Wales. We need a whole-of-New South Wales inclusion policy to move forward, with the best interests of students with disabilities at the forefront of change. Every student can learn, and the placement of students with disabilities must move beyond a behaviour control strategy to a strategy of creating learning opportunities for success for both teachers and students. We know that when students are fully included in our education system they benefit academically and socially, with long-term benefits for the individual later in their lives and for our State and Australia as a whole.

Inclusion is not integration where students are placed amongst other similar aged peers without appropriate adjustments made according to individual needs. Inclusion is not segregation where students are placed in separate learning environments, missing out on all the benefits that come with social interactions with other peers. Inclusive education should be guided by the United Nations' nine core features for inclusive education: a system-wide approach; committed leaders; whole-of-school collaboration with students; collaboration with families and the community; respecting and valuing diversity; a confident, skilled and capable workforce; accessible learning environments; and effective transitions, monitoring and evaluation.

In 2014 the UNESCO-Emir Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah Prize to Promote Quality Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was awarded to New Brunswick in Canada. New Brunswick's policy 322 on inclusive education was introduced in 2013 after previously bold moves in the 1980s saw all students with disabilities included in mainstream classrooms. However, the success of this model varied from school to school and without a guiding policy it was clear that, even with the best of intentions, if there is not the support and the resources provided to schools, teachers, and students to see the program through it will not work. After the recent review to ensure that all public schools are inclusive, the new policy in New Brunswick now defines a system that supports students in common learning environments. It sets clear requirements at each level, from the classroom to the top of the education department.

The policy is not disability specific but rather a broader framework for inclusion in education, aligned with the belief that inclusion is about all and not just a specific subset of students. The policy had a number of innovative aspects to it. It is inclusive, there is no labelling and it is action focused. It focuses on common learning environments that enfranchise all students, with any additional supports for those who need it and without segregation. Schools ensure that personalised learning plans are designed for certain students by a team of experts, with classroom teachers given time and resources to implement and evaluate the plan.

The policy in Canada is a continuous process. It uses inclusive language and is about each student feeling respected, confident and safe. It reverses the usual stereotype that students with disability cannot fit into

mainstream classes and instead asks the question: How do we make the system better and not just try to jam people into what has essentially been the same model for 150 years? Education is universal, respectful, and flexible. It should be individual and delivered in a way that makes people feel welcome and valued. Every student can learn. In New South Wales we just need to change our expectations, not force children to meet ours.

The Queensland Labor Government introduced an inclusive education policy statement over 18 months ago, reinforcing that local schools are part of local communities and need to take the responsibility to make the appropriate adjustments so that all students are engaged in a rigorous and relevant learning program. Queensland commits to a journey for every student, every family and every community, from all cultural, community and family backgrounds. All identities are welcomed and belong in local schools.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability is coming to New South Wales next year. The New South Wales Government is going to get a rude shock and will need to get a move on on the path towards an inclusive education policy. Various states of Canada have had inclusive policies in schools since the 1970s and Canada now has the highest number of parliamentarians with disability and the highest number of community leaders with disability. Let us move this State to a place where people with disability are respected and included in schools and in society.

### CULTURE WARS

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (19:32:47):** Over the last week or so we saw the best and the worst of public life on display as the State dealt with the bushfire crisis. I thank and acknowledge the efforts of the hundreds of people—so many of whom are volunteers—who have been fighting the bushfires and those who have been supporting the firefighters but are not on the front line. It takes great courage, backed up by a great deal of training and expertise. It goes against every natural urge to run into the flames when others are running the other way—often at the instruction of emergency personnel in the interest of public safety—to help protect a community that a firefighter may not be part of or may have never visited before. The fact that this is done voluntarily displays the best traits of our common humanity.

At the same time, however, the worst behaviour or the worst of commentary was also on display from some of our elected representatives. I am sure that the volunteer firefighters were too busy listening to their two-way radios to tune into the normal radio but if they had they would have been shaking their heads in disgust when they heard some of the commentary on the fires from so-called political leaders. I am talking about comments such as a Greens party senator describing parliamentary colleagues as "no better than a bunch of arsonists". He was backed in by his co-deputy leader on Sunday. There were also comments from the Deputy Prime Minister, who suggested that people "don't need the ravings of some pure, enlightened and woke capital city greenies at this time". Sadly, this is the sort of language in the climate change debate that is spurring on tribalism, entrenching positions at the extremes and becoming the enemy of progress.

The language associated with this tribalism is now constantly ramping up the hyperbole of ideologically pure positions on both sides. This damaging culture war is hindering those in the moderate centre who want to see progress but recognise that there are areas of grey, while tribalism demands only black or white. Today there is pressure to act and think and to do so in absolute terms in a range of areas but nowhere more so than through actions addressing climate change. Not to do so is condemned. This absolutism exists despite the decades of human history that suggests acting, thinking and doing in absolute terms have disastrous results.

One of the great things about escaping this place is returning home to our communities. In Wollongong I have the benefit of hearing unvarnished public opinion on a range of issues—straight talk with no sugar-coating. I can report to the House that the people of Wollongong are disgusted with the hyped-up, rhetorical theatrics of last week. They expect and deserve better. It is feeding their frustration about inaction from governments and further eroding their confidence in our democratic institutions to deliver. They see it as another way to stymie or frustrate genuine progress. Except for a few inevitable knuckle draggers, there is acceptance that action needs to be taken to address climate change. If you do not believe that now you probably never will. On the other side, the equally ideologically pure are driven by policy prescriptions of "stop" it, "ban" it or "end" it, and if you do not agree with an absolutist position you are labelled as not serious. Both sides deny the reality of the world in which solutions must be implemented by fleeing to the perceived safety of a political slanging match.

Our response must acknowledge the world we live in. We cannot simply implement plans that result in considerable change to our economy and community by resetting things to zero and starting again. Change must be incremental and it cannot leave some behind or require some individuals and communities to pay a relatively higher price than others simply because of where they live or work. The current culture wars are creating a climate of fear and uncertainty and growing responses from people which result in actions that go against their own long-term interests and those of their families and communities. The questions, as in most things controversial, are: What to do, how to do it, where to do it and who will bear the cost of getting it done? When it comes to the

debate about action on climate change, what we should "end" and "stop" is extremist language. Instead we should get down to the business of developing and implementing policies that prompt and support actions by individuals and industries that change behaviour.

Rather than pursuing the culture wars, we should be debating the core elements of government responses to adaptation and mitigation policies and priorities. What should our policy, infrastructure and program responses be? Where are the areas of greatest immediate need? When should governments directly intervene and what should they change or redesign in markets to provide different incentives? How much of our scarce public or private resources should be directed towards specific responses? Because there is always, like it or not, an opportunity cost. We must also consider how communities, families and jobs will be supported. The solutions to many of the problems we face will not be obvious or easy or lie within the remit of one branch of science or one agency of government. As the late Prime Minister Gough Whitlam famously said, "Certainly only the impotent are pure." Unless the extremist language on both sides of this debate is quelled, the quixotic quests for ideological purity of this culture war risks rendering governments impotent to respond and to deal with the big questions we all face.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **DANIEL SOLWAY**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (19:38:06):** I congratulate Daniel Solway, a local East Hills cricketer who has become the first player since Kurtis Patterson eight seasons ago to score a century on his first-class debut for New South Wales. During a Sheffield Shield game against South Australia at the Adelaide Oval on 1 November Daniel scored an unbeaten century. It was his debut for New South Wales. Daniel grew up playing junior cricket for St Christopher's Cricket Club and played representative cricket for Bankstown from the age of nine. He also played cricket for his primary school, St Luke's, and during high school at De La Salle, Revesby Heights. When Daniel is not playing for the Blues he plays first grade cricket for Bankstown, is the captain of the team and is there on the weekends for training sessions to guide his team in a valuable way. If this is not enough cricket for one person, when Daniel is not playing cricket he works as a cricket manager in western Sydney with Cricket NSW. I hope Daniel plays many more games for the almighty Blues and scores many more centuries.

#### **BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL DEPUTY MAYOR JULIE GRIFFITHS**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:39:05):** I congratulate Councillor Julie Griffiths on being elected Blacktown City Council Deputy Mayor. Julie Griffiths has been active in local government for the past two decades through her senior roles in the United Services Union, the Australian Local Government Women's Association and her recent re-election to the board of Local Government NSW. Julie has served seven years as a Blacktown councillor and many other years involved in the local area through her sporting and coaching roles, as a community volunteer or as a member of council advisory committees. I had the great pleasure of supporting Julie to become the chair of Blacktown City Council's inaugural Women's Advisory Committee. Under her leadership it has shown strong advocacy for the advancement of women and anti-domestic violence campaigns. Congratulations, Julie, on becoming deputy mayor. I know you will continue to be a credit to the city of Blacktown.

#### **CULTURE FEST 2019**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales) (19:40:01):** I congratulate the magnificent team at the University of New England [UNE] international department who organised a terrific celebration of Armidale's diversity and cultural richness. The 2019 Culture Fest brought together almost 5,000 Armidale residents for a celebration of what is one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in inland New South Wales. Residents and visitors were able to stroll through Curtis Park, Armidale, and taste food from every country in the world represented by the more than 50 different nationalities that now call Armidale home. There was terrific dancing and music to entertain the crowds all evening. I acknowledge and congratulate UNE Events and Community Engagement Officer Alexandra Cook and her wonderful offsider Harrison Munday on organising a terrific Culture Fest, which I am sure will be the first of many more to come.

#### **REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (19:41:03):** At 11.00 a.m. on the eleventh day of the eleventh month we mark the day World War One ended in 1918. At Club Wyong RSL I paid my respects on Remembrance Day to all those who served. Wyong High School and Wyong Public School students spoke on the day at the Wyong RSL ceremony, which included a formal wreath laying, surrounded by dignitaries, school students and members of the general public. Remembrance Day in Toukley was held at Club Toukley RSL, with its recently finished upgrade at the Toukley sub-branch cenotaph by Central Coast Memorials. The cenotaph holds two

soldiers with "Lest We Forget" written on either side of the plaque and an eternal flame placed on top. There are stainless steel rails for wheelchair access up the newly created ramp. We remember Australians who served and died in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

#### **HORNSBY-KU-RING-GAI PCYC BUS LAUNCH**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) (19:41:16):** I recently attended the official launch of the new 12-seater bus at the Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai PCYC. It was partially funded with a \$10,000 grant from the Government and \$50,000 from the St George Foundation. The bus will allow the Police Youth Command to transport its members who are taking part in programs such as Fit for Work, Fit for Life and Fit for Service. The broader PCYC community will also make use of the vehicle for camps, conferences and other sporting activities that they participate in. At the launch Vanessa Barry, CEO of the St George Foundation, formally handed over the keys to club president Peter Kirkwood, OAM, and club manager Daniel Anderson. It is important to note that to the club this is more than a bus, it is an opportunity to help those who need it most and it will change the way this club operates for years to come. The PCYC is a unique youth club as it is the only one that shares a partnership between the community and the NSW Police Force. I look forward to seeing the bus in action.

#### **FRANKIE PARRIS AND COOPER LLOYD**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (19:43:03):** I am delighted to recognise the achievements of Frankie Parris and Cooper Lloyd, who are both students from St Pius X College, Adamstown, in my electorate of Charlestown. Thanks to Frankie and Cooper, St Pius College is the first winner of the new award for Song Writing School of the Year in the Australian Children's Music Foundation National Song Writing Competition. Their song, which is entitled *Unplug and Connect*, encourages us to unplug from technology and connect with friends and family. The opening words of their song are:

Everybody always looking down at their devices,  
That is one sign that humans are going through a crisis.  
Get off the screens, it's now or never,  
There isn't a lot of time to spend together.

The college has received a prize of \$5,000 which has been spent on purchasing new musical instruments. It is a great prize honouring a talented pair of students with an important message.

#### **COFFS HARBOUR LIGHT THE NIGHT**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:44:04):** Darkness has given way to light at a poignant Coffs Harbour ceremony. The Leukaemia Foundation's Light the Night gives hope to all affected by blood cancer. I am proud to say this beautiful evening has been warmly embraced by our community. On 18 October the Twilight Food Market at Park Beach Reserve was transformed into a sea of glowing lanterns. It was our night to walk beside those facing their own blood cancer journey and to remember those loved ones lost. I walked beside Mandy Baston, her daughter Sheree and grandchildren Ella and Leon. In 2017 Mandy was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma B-cell. She spoke of the incredible and immense care and work of the doctors and nurses at the Coffs Harbour hospital and the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute. Jason Whitmore has organised Coffs Harbour's Light the Night through the Leukaemia Foundation since 2015 and I applaud him for his devotion. Leona Redman is another who has stepped up for the cause and Maureen Shaw from the Twilight Food Market is another magnificent supporter.

#### **HUNTER SCHOOL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:45:03):** This month I had the absolute pleasure of dancing on stage with 14 students from Hunter School of the Performing Arts [HSPA] as part of Hit Newcastle's anti-domestic violence lip sync battle. Not only was I blown away by the talent of these dancers, I was equally impressed with their work ethic and positive attitude. Thank you to Dylan Daniels, Cailey McMullen, Tahlia Ryner, Eve Smedley, Kasey Brown, Rylee Orrock, Billie-Ann Austin, Layla Smedley, Meg Burton, Monique Sullivan, Abbey Fotheringham, Maggie Teasdale, Chanelle Velovski and Abbey Mathews for stepping up and standing against domestic and family violence. You should all be proud. Thank you also to principal Jo Gray and dance head teachers Hayley Vimpani, for your fantastic choreography, and Penny Fleming for your sterling support. The HSPA team taught me a lot, filled me with confidence and made our performance absolutely spectacular.

#### **PICTON SWIMMING CLUB**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (19:46:06):** I acknowledge and congratulate Picton Swimming Club, which just recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary this month. This milestone was made even sweeter with its win at the annual Macarthur Amateur Swimming Clubs Association Carnival between Picton, Camden, Mount Annan, Atlantis, Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown. Starting off as a summer-only club, Picton

Swimming Club is now a well-established all-seasons club, with the installation of heated outdoor pools at Wollondilly Leisure Centre. The pool offers an extensive range of learn-to-swim classes for infants, adults and those with special needs. Amongst its greatest achievements is one of its own members, a young boy with Down syndrome, who won numerous medals and set world records at the world disability championships. Picton Swimming Club should be very proud of all it has achieved over the past 50 years. I look forward to its achievements for the next 50 years to come

#### **NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:46:56):** People often say to me that they do not know how I do what I do. Quite frankly, this is what I think when I think of our local Rural Fire Service volunteers. Recently I caught up with members of the Tilligerry Rural Fire Brigade, some of whom had formed part of the lower Hunter strike team. These volunteers headed north into the hellish firestorm north of Port Stephens. They voluntarily fought fires threatening homes and the lives of people who were not even in their own communities. The descriptions of what they saw and what they did were terrifying. I recognise and thank all RFS volunteers in Port Stephens for their courage, their hard work and their generosity of spirit, which goes to the very heart of who we are as a nation—our selfless humanity. As we head into another long, hot, dry summer I urge everyone to be prepared and I hope everyone stays safe.

#### **VICKI STYLIANOU**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:47:52):** I congratulate 21-year-old St Clair resident Vicki Stylianou for her participation at the Westmead Research Hub Showcase. After completing an advanced science degree at the University of Technology Sydney Vicki began her honours at Westmead, where she now focuses on producing a vaccine for a common form of the herpes simplex virus [HSV]. Her research looks at how a component of a vaccine, called an adjuvant, activates and assists the immune system in responding to viruses. As a student who always enjoyed science and asking complex questions, she found herself drawn to the public health sector, particularly viruses and vaccines, which is why she chose to do her honours in that particular field. With an end goal of finding a vaccine for HIV or herpes, Vicki continues to work hard to further her career prospects and make a significant difference to the community. She also wants to be an example to other young women and encourage them to consider a future in science by using their talents and skills to pursue an exciting career. Well done, Vicki, for all your hard work. I wish you all the best for your future.

#### **LAYLA SHARP**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (19:48:52):** I am so happy to recognise Layla Sharp, a brilliant young sporting star from Cambridge Park Public School in my electorate. Layla has competed in the 2019 New South Wales Open Athletics Championships, represented New South Wales at the 2019 School Sport Australia Cross Country Championship and received the Local Sports Stars Inspiration Award for the Penrith area. Layla has broken several longstanding records this year. She has claimed gold in both the 800 metres and 1,500 metres. Layla set more records in the 100 and 200 metres and the long jump and was part of the New South Wales 4 x 100 relay team that also won gold. She is definitely an inspiring young athlete. She is a terrific representative for our community. I know her family are very proud of her and I am too. Well done, Layla.

#### **JACKIE CARPENTER**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:49:51):** I congratulate local Hawkesbury resident Jackie Carpenter for winning the Western Sydney Women's Inspirational Woman Award 2019. In 2015 Jackie and her husband, Bob, founded the company One Giant Leap Australia, which prepares and sustains the next generation to thrive in an increasingly technologically complex and competitive global economy. Both Jackie and Bob bring great expertise to the work they do, with Jackie having an extensive and diverse background in education whilst Bob has a diverse background in the defence and aviation sectors. Mrs Carpenter was also a finalist in the women's entrepreneur award, whilst One Giant Leap was also recently recognised in the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence in education, training and careers. I congratulate both Jackie and her husband, Bob, for their ongoing success and I wish them all the best in the future.

#### **TUGGERAH LAKES SHOW BAND BENEFIT CONCERT**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:50:53):** On Sunday 27 October I attended the Tuggerah Lakes Show Band Benefit Concert at The Entrance Leagues Club to support communities suffering the current drought. The benefit raised over \$6,600, which will go towards the relief campaigns Buy A Bale and Need for Feed to help our farmers during this difficult time. It is important that I give special mention to Tuggerah Lakes Show Band's Ron Beach and the band members for the program they put together on the day, The Entrance Lions Club for hosting the event and compères Barry O'Keefe and Barry Bradshaw, president and vice-president respectively of the Tuggerah Lakes branch of the National Servicemen's Association. I particularly thank my

constituents, who gave generously to help out struggling farmers—yet another wonderful example of The Entrance community helping our fellow Australians in this time of need.

#### **GRAHAM 'JONNO' JOHNSTON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:51:53):** I congratulate Graham "Jonno" Johnston, founder of Clean4Shore, for being recognised with the Local Hero Award at the New South Wales Landcare Awards. The Clean4Shore organisation was also recognised with the State Coastcare Award. I must admit, Jonno is one of the most dedicated, energetic and persistent people in my electorate. He works incredibly hard at cleaning up our local environment, particularly waterways, and involves school groups through his clean-up trips. Jonno also gives up countless hours to Macmasters Beach Surf Club as director of education. What set Clean4Shore apart and ensured its success in receiving the Coastcare award was the engagement of school groups and the local community in clean-up activities. Jonno often undertakes group day trips to clean up abandoned oyster farms and other environmental threats to the local ecosystem. I also acknowledge the contributions that Central Coast Council, Hornsby Shire Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Local Land Services make to Clean4Shore. Congratulations again to Jonno on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **SAM HEFFERNAN**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:52:59):** I extend my congratulations and best wishes to Wagga Wagga man Sam Heffernan, a 2019 Australian Training Awards finalist. In October Mr Heffernan was named New South Wales Trainee of the Year. I acknowledge this great achievement ahead of this Thursday's countrywide presentation event in Brisbane. Last year the 19-year-old completed a second year with the Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga as a sport and recreation trainee while studying a Certificate III in Sport and Recreation via TAFE. Wrapping up his qualification this year, Mr Heffernan—a self-confessed sports enthusiast—now helps to run sports programs for more than 30 Catholic schools in the region. A number of workshops in Queensland this week have been preparing award finalists like young Mr Heffernan to become ambassadors for vocational education and training pathways. Mr Heffernan's success at the State awards and the 2019 Riverina Training Awards before that showcases the alternative employment opportunities available to young men and women after school. I wish Mr Heffernan good luck in Thursday's presentation and in his future. No matter what the outcome, he has done Wagga Wagga proud.

#### **PROBUS CLUB OF GRANDVIEWS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:54:04):** I acknowledge the work of the Probus Club of Grandviews, an active Probus club operating in Peakhurst. The club was established in 1990 and has since grown to more than 100 members. Recently the Probus Club of Grandviews was told it needed to relocate from its usual meeting room. With this move came many costs, including the need to find a location that would accommodate the large number of club members and was fitted with sufficient audio equipment. I am pleased that the State Government has been able to secure a \$4,000 grant for the Probus club to assist with the moving costs. This will enable the club to continue to meet and adequately cater to the needs of its members. The Probus Club of Grandviews does great work with the retirees in the community. I look forward to continuing to support the organisation. I thank the club president, Errol Clausen, and all the other club members for their dedication to the spirit of Probus clubs.

#### **KAI DARWIN**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:54:56):** Congratulations to Central Coast local, Kai Darwin, who this year won the 2019 Australian Youth Lifesaver of the Year award. Kai joined Umina nippers when he was five years old and has been involved with the club ever since. It is easy to understand why Kai won this award and recognition as he assists with the organisation of the club in a number of roles. Kai facilitates the club's youth camps; participates in the leadership program, club and community education campaigns; and has offered his assistance to the Surf Life Saving NSW titles, to name only a few. This is not the first time Kai has been recognised for his contributions to surf lifesaving and the community. In 2018 Kai was awarded the NSW Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year award and the Central Coast Young Volunteer of the Year award. Kai joined the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving in Parliament last week. I congratulate him on his achievements, and wish him well in his future education and volunteering efforts. He will make a fantastic enrolled nurse.

#### **BILLY BROWNING**

#### **RICHARD QUIGLEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:55:55):** We often say natural disasters bring out the best in Australians, and this drought is no different. It is causing unspeakable hardship for our rural families and communities, but also it is providing an opportunity for our farmers to do what they do best, and that is innovate. That is why I was proud to see two farmers from the Dubbo electorate recognised with a prestigious Nuffield

Scholarship. Narromine's Billy Browning operates a 3,500 hectare mixed cropping enterprise with his family. Faced with the growing issue around water reliability, Billy sees an opportunity to investigate alternative irrigation options and multiple uses from a single water source.

Trangie's Richard Quigley helps manage his family's mixed farming operation. With the wide adoption of zero-tillage farming, Richard will look at enhancing the method by retaining more crop residue above ground. He believes this will increase infiltration rates and the ability to store moisture, as well as limit erosion and evaporation. Congratulations to Billy and Richie. I wish both men the best of luck in their research endeavours.

#### **BELMORE AND DISTRICT ALL SAINTS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (19:57:00):** Congratulations to the Greek Orthodox parish and community of Belmore and District All Saints Orthodox Church on their 55 years of parish services. All Saints is one of the largest parishes in New South Wales. Thousands of Greek Australians have been baptised at Belmore, including me and my brother. It is our family's parish church. I congratulate everyone on many years of contributing to the community. Thank you to Father Chris Triantafyllou, Presvytera Sevasti, Very Reverend Archimandrite Apostolos Trifyllis, the parish board led by president Steve Rafeletos, the ladies auxiliary and the Belmore youth committee. I thank them for their important work in sustaining our community.

#### **WEST WYALONG LIONS CHARITY CONCERT**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:57:50):** This year's sellout crowd at the West Wyalong Lions Club Charity Variety Concert raised an amazing \$6,500 for CanAssist. This takes the total of four Lions Club concerts to \$24,500. Despite the ongoing drought and harsh seasonal conditions, the community has come together to support the local charity. Residents were treated to an evening of excitement, fun and laughter. A special mention goes to Lions Club member and concert organiser Ron Cooper, Pace Farm and Evolution Mining for their financial contributions. I also thank Bernardi's supermarket, Pink Velvet and West Wyalong IGA for their generosity in donating raffle prizes. It is great to see communities get behind these social events, not only to support charities but also to support one another.

#### **HUNTER WORKERS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:58:48):** On Wednesday evening Hunter Workers will celebrate 150 years of standing up for the region's workforce, fighting for better pay and better conditions. The first incarnation of Hunter Workers was the Eight Hour League, before establishing itself as the Newcastle Trades Hall Council in 1895. It is the oldest trades hall in Australia and currently unites 70,000 workers across 27 unions. Unions are responsible for Australian workers having access to decent working hours, health and safety laws, annual leave, superannuation, equal pay, Medicare, penalty rates and workers' compensation—things that every worker benefits from in some form. Hunter Workers has done more though, with notable local achievements including being instrumental in establishing the University of Newcastle, forming the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, protecting historic Newcastle East and establishing Foreshore Park.

#### **DIWALI CELEBRATIONS**

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education) (19:59:57):** On Monday 21 October the New South Wales Government held the annual Diwali celebrations. The Opera House was lit up to acknowledge and pay tribute to the contributions of the Australian-Indian community. Diwali is a worldwide celebration with the universal message of the victory of light over darkness, and good over evil—great values for our whole community. For many years I have been privileged to represent the people of Parramatta, and with that our significant Indian and South Asian community. Parramatta is home to one of the largest South Asian communities in New South Wales. I have been fortunate enough to attend many Diwali celebrations over the years. It is fantastic to see how people from all backgrounds come together to celebrate Diwali, no matter what religion they follow. This year is special because it marks the 550th birth anniversary of the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It was great to see the Opera House lit in unity alongside Hindu and Sikh practitioners, celebrating this significant milestone. In New South Wales we value our diversity.

#### **WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY COMPETITION**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) (20:01:05):** Writing is an important skill for students to develop. I am delighted to note that many students in my electorate of Davidson partook in the 2019 Write a Book in a Day competition. The competition encourages students to plan, write, illustrate, edit and print a 5,000-word book in just 12 hours. The books are donated to children in hospitals across Australia. The competition is part of The Kids' Cancer Project and raises money for Westmead Hospital. Ninety students from Roseville College from year 7 to year 10 participated in the challenge this year and raised \$4,500. I congratulate students in my electorate and schools such as Roseville College on partaking in this meaningful competition.

## MOVING BODIES

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (20:02:04):** I congratulate an awesome local business, Moving Bodies, which has been awarded the Most Outstanding Fitness Service at the recent Hornsby Local Business Awards. It beat 12 finalists to take out the award, which caps off an amazing year for the business. It started in 1994 providing gymnastic programs for schools. This has now grown and it caters to thousands of schools across Sydney and Melbourne. In 2012 it opened the Moving Bodies Centre in Mount Ku-ring-gai and it has been a hit ever since. It provides both kids and adults fitness classes as well as kids parties and school holiday programs. Last year it expanded, opening an indoor pool, parkour centre and ninja course. With the growing popularity of the Ninja Warrior program, kids and adults are loving a chance to test themselves on the course. I recently visited Moving Bodies and I can confirm I will not make a Ninja Warrior; however, I have no doubt it is destined for great success. Congratulations to Bec and the team from Moving Bodies on this award and the recognition of their hard work.

## BATLOW HANGI

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:03:13):** My wife, Kerin, and I were delighted to sample the taste sensations of a traditional Maori hāngī in Batlow on the weekend. I thank Talbingo Men's Shed Secretary Bob Quarmby, as well as Batlow Development League members Ray Billing and Keith Dawson, dessert maker Dawn Lubke and members of the Batlow RSL Club, hāngī extraordinaire Chingy and his team for a great night. Not only was the Pacific Island buffet-style meal amazing—featuring five different meats as well as some superb corn—but also I was blown away by the camaraderie and connection of people from towns in my electorate. This is the second year the Batlow Development League and the Talbingo Men's Shed have put on a feast to raise money for a good cause. Mr Quarmby said he came up with the idea of a combined event last year, as a way to bring together friends from both towns. After last year's success, he said, "Why don't we take it in turns each year so it doesn't get stale." On Saturday more than 115 people raised nearly \$600 for Adelong father Craig Wilson, who is battling motor neurone disease.

## STORIES VOLUME 5

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:04:14):** Everyone has a story to tell. On the Coffs Coast we are fortunate to have plenty of storytellers willing to share their ripping yarns with us. I am extremely proud that four of them are among the 100 seniors statewide who are telling their tales of triumph and tragedy in this year's edition of Seniors' Stories Volume 5. I congratulate my constituents on having their treasured stories included in this impressive collection. They are Jill Nash from Sawtell with *A Play on Words*, Willa Hogarth from Coffs Harbour with *Angry Oldie or Blissful Boomer?*, Alpheus Williams from Red Rock with *Post-Polio, My Wife and My Dog* and David Dodd from Sapphire Beach with *Watery Embrace*. An initiative of the NSW Seniors Card, members were invited to contribute short stories to Seniors' Stories Volume 5, with the theme of "Love Your Life". I thank Premier Gladys Berejiklian and acting seniors Minister Geoff Lee for recognising and valuing the experiences of our seniors. This latest volume is available from 9 December at all local New South Wales libraries to borrow. You can also visit the Seniors Card website.

## THE ENTRANCE CAMERA CLUB

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:05:13):** On Saturday 9 November I was delighted to attend a morning tea to celebrate The Entrance Camera Club's sixtieth anniversary. Sixty years ago on 27 November the club was formed and to celebrate the club held an exhibition over the week preceding the morning tea that showcased various award-winning photos, as well as a collection of individual member's photographs. I was honoured to meet the club's founding member, Ted Baker, who is still a current and active member. I acknowledge the wonderful talents of the club's members and their passion for photography across the Central Coast and Hunter Valley regions, which has seen them achieve a number of recent awards. My sincerest appreciation is directed to the club for its hospitality and to its committee members, president Barbara Blades, secretary Anthony Spratt and Catriona O'Brien who organised the event. Together with my colleagues Federal Member for Dobell Emma McBride and Central Coast Council Mayor Lisa Matthews who were also in attendance we wished the club a happy sixtieth anniversary.

## NICOLE SUFFLING

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (20:06:21):** St Clair resident Nicole Suffling discovered Feel The Magic in 2015 to help her then 14-year-old brother, Liam, deal with the grief of their father's death. Nicole was so grateful for how the organisation was helping her family that she decided to get involved and join the team. After seeing the changes in her brother's behaviour since attending camps through Feel The Magic, she could not help but experience it for herself. Now working as the ACT-New South Wales program coordinator, Nicole is seeing the real-life results that Camp Magic is having on young people who are experiencing grief.

Nicole started out as a mentor, then a talk time leader and eventually became a coordinator. The camps are for children aged seven years to 17 years from across Sydney who have lost a parent, sibling or legal guardian. They provide self-help strategies to assist the children when they experience grief at home or at school. The camps also encourage fun activities such as archery and rock climbing, focusing on getting the children connecting again and seeing that they are not alone in experiencing grief. Well done, Nicole, for choosing to make a difference in the lives of young people. I wish you all the best in your role.

#### **FATHER CHRISTOPHER BIRD**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (20:07:17):** Father Christopher Bird was ordained as a priest to serve in the Anglican Church in 1979. He has ministered as the Rector of the Parish of Adamstown, which crosses the electorates of Newcastle and my electorate of Charlestown, since 1989. He also serves as a Chaplain to the NSW Police Force and is a past Provincial Master of the Society of the Holy Cross. Father Chris is an active volunteer referee and a life member of the Northern NSW State League Football Referees Association. He and his wife, Meri, manage a lively and creative local community theatre company called Theatre on Brunner, which is situated on the church's campus. On Sunday 1 December a celebratory Mass will be held at Saint Stephen's Anglican Church in Adamstown to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of his ordination. It is an extraordinary commitment to have served in Adamstown for 30 of the 40 years of his ministry. On behalf of my local community I thank him, and I send him and his family my very best wishes.

#### **BUSHIRESBUSHFIRES AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:08:19):** With the bushfires raging, we have seen the stellar commitment and perseverance of our RFS volunteers, staff and crew, emergency services personnel and National Parks teams. On behalf of the people of Hawkesbury I thank them for protecting our houses, property and livestock. These brave men and women put their lives and health on the line. I extend my appreciation to their families, who have been understanding of the time and effort crews spend away from home. I also acknowledge employers for their flexibility and support of RFS volunteers. It is early in the fire season, but we are grateful! The Hawkesbury community is very tight knit and I have no doubt that our locals will look out for one another, particularly the elderly and less mobile. I encourage my constituents to remain vigilant for their own safety and that of others.

#### **DEVELOPING DREAMS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:09:13):** I congratulate the Developing Dreams Early Learning Centre on being recognised as the Best Small Private Regional Centre in New South Wales for 2019 at the Excellence in Early Childhood Education Awards. The education of our youngest Australians is an incredibly important pursuit. I am also thankful that intelligent and caring people like Catherine Schasser and Kristine Elliott of Developing Dreams have the passion and drive to do this incredible work. They have brought their extensive experience in the early childhood sector and are now caring for dozens of young Coasties. Developing Dreams also work to foster a sense of community for their families on the Central Coast by running social and workshop programs for parents, supporting them through the joys and challenges of parenthood. Catherine and Kristine's commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of children and their parents should be commended. I congratulate them again on their award and on continuing to provide excellent early childhood education to kids on the Central Coast.

#### **JOSEPH FLICK**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:10:11):** I commend Joseph Flick, a Dubbo man who has dedicated himself to bringing peace to Aboriginal soldiers who never made it home. Joseph's grandfather, Mick Flick, served in World War 1. It was that slice of family history that sparked Joseph's interest. But the plight of Australia's Indigenous became a passion when a 2013 football trip to France led him to Villers-Bretonneux. Joseph has since travelled to Europe five times and has located the burial sites of soldiers from across western New South Wales, including Walgett's Thomas Dodd. He hopes bringing news of the soldiers' final resting places overseas can bring some closure to their families. This year the significance of Joseph's work was recognised. He has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to further research and document the burial sites of Indigenous soldiers who died during World War 1 in France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. For Joseph, this work is a way of bringing their spirits home, back to country. Thanks, Joseph, for your important work and congratulations on your fellowship.

#### **KOREA FESTIVAL DAY**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (20:11:11):** I thank the President of the Korean Society of Sydney, Kwang Hong Yoon, and everyone who was involved in organising the recent Korea Festival Day in Croydon Park. The Korean Society of Sydney has supported the Korean community in Sydney since the society was founded in 1968. The festival at Croydon Park was a fantastic celebration of Korean culture and the contribution

it makes to Australia's multicultural society. Relations between Korea and Australia date back to 1889, when a small group of Australian missionaries arrived in Busan. In the 1950s around 17,000 Australian soldiers travelled to Korea to fight in the Korean War. Australia and Korea have a very important relationship. I acknowledge that our leader, Jodie McKay, spoke at the Korean Festival. Mayor Khal Asfour and many other dignitaries attended the festival. When I was in Greece recently I visited the Korean memorial in Athens to thank our Korean community.

#### **WORLD DIABETES DAY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:12:15):** Last Thursday was World Diabetes Day, which celebrates the families of people living with diabetes and the support, care and encouragement they provide. Type 2 diabetes is a condition that affects many in their daily life—medication, food, other health conditions, work, school, social interactions and physical activity. Having a diabetes family, which consists of family, friends, carers, health professionals, peers and colleagues, makes the journey just that little easier. Across the Central Coast thousands of people are living with type 2 diabetes. To coincide with World Diabetes Day, there have been a number of information sessions and workshops in our local area. This includes a carb smart workshop at Ettalong, a small group course about understanding and managing the changes that type 2 diabetes brings to a person's life, more about exercise plans, foot care and living with insulin support. I congratulate Diabetes Australia on the number of initiatives it is providing. I am pleased to be able to bring this information to the attention of the House today.

#### **REBEL AND RACHAEL HANLON**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:13:19):** I congratulate Rebel and Rachael Hanlon, who lead the local Blacktown City Lions Club. Like all Lions clubs, it has a lot of community support and it raises money through various fundraising activities such as barbecues and the Lions' Christmas cakes, and undertakes various activities for Blacktown City Council. Its fundraising goes to very worthy causes such as the Country Women's Association in Quirindi where it donated \$7,500 so every child in Quirindi can access the Life Education program. It raised a lot of money for the emergency services, the Rural Fire Service at Eastern Creek and Plumpton. It has donated two BiliSoft phototherapy units for babies with jaundice to Blacktown Hospital. Mount Druitt Palliative Care Unit gardens have been updated, and it constructed bus shelters and provided two table tennis tables for Blacktown City Council. Thank you very much to Rachael and Rebel Hanlon for all your efforts for our local community.

#### **OATLEY LIONS CLUB**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:14:20):** I inform the House of the recent annual Oatley Village Festival, organised by the Oatley Lions Club. The festival is a fantastic event held in the heart of Oatley and brings the local community together to experience an array of stalls, live entertainment and activities for the whole family. This year's festival saw over 180 food, craft and variety stalls, as well as crowd favourite activities including animal farms and Harley motorbike rides. The festival is one of the largest events in the St George area, and has been running for over 40 years. It serves as the main fundraiser for the Oatley Lions Club, a very active community group in the local area. A big thank you is extended to Oatley Lions President John Morgan, as well as festival coordinator Bryan Pirie and the whole event coordination team. I had a great time walking through the event, and chatting with stallholders and community members. The festival is an event I look forward to every year. This year we judged the Lego competition. I commend the Oatley Lions Club for its organisation of another fantastic event, and thank its members for their continuous contribution to the local area.

#### **MACKENZIE EYLES**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment) (20:15:30):** I pay tribute to an amazing young lady in my electorate, 10-year-old Mackenzie Eyles, who has been named Young Hero of the Year by the NSW Cancer Council. The awards, held for the first time this year, honoured the supporters who help make the work of the Cancer Council possible. At just 10 years old Mackenzie Eyles has competed in five Seven Bridges Walk events. The 28-kilometre trail through the streets of Sydney is not easy for adults, let alone a 10-year-old, but this amazing young lady is determined to continue to raise funds and awareness for the Cancer Council. Over the years she has raised over \$9,000 and this year wants to crack \$10,000. She hopes that her fundraising efforts will help eradicate cancer and stop anyone else losing a loved one to the disease. I met with her recently and she is an outstanding young lady. I have to say, Mackenzie's mother is doing an awesome job raising her. I congratulate Mackenzie on her determination and drive to make a difference in our community. She has a very bright future ahead of her. Thanks very much, Mackenzie. I look forward to watching your star continue to rise.

**BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB'S 61ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I was pleased to attend Bankstown Sports Club's 61st Annual General Meeting on Monday, 4th November 2019 at Bankstown Sports Club, marking 61 years of growth and development in the Bankstown community. I acknowledge Bankstown Sports Club's Chairman Mr John Murray OAM, Directors Mr Richard Phillips, Mr Jim Ronis, Mr Alex Fulcher OAM MBE, Mr Vernon Falconer, Mr Martin Klumpp OAM, Mr Jim Hanna and Ms Carolyn Campbell, as well as Chief Executive Officer Mr Mark Condi and I congratulate them on what has been another successful year for the club.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the club's tremendous financial and in-kind contributions to the local community through important initiatives and charitable endeavours, including numerous charitable donations and fundraisers, community projects and programs, as well as supporting local sporting clubs and community groups, under the ClubGRANTS scheme. Bankstown Sports Club provides invaluable support to the Bankstown community and the local economy through the Flinders Centre which has a capacity to provide 1,500 jobs. I would like to thank the Board of Directors and Management for the continued honour of being a Patron and I wish the club continued success into the future.

**JULIA MORALES AND REBECCA MONIN**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Congratulations to two Glenmore Park residents, Julia Morales and Rebecca Monin. Julia had an outstanding year in Football this past season. The 17-year-old footballer represents her club - Marconi Stallions FC and her school – Mamre Anglican School with a high level of skill and dedication. This past season, Julia scored two goals in the Grand Final for Marconi Under 17 Women's team, giving them a 3-2 victory in extra time in the National Premier League 2. For her school, Julia was a key player in the Girl's team that won the Combined Independent Schools Football Cup for the first time. She was also Assistant Coach of the Glenmore Park Football Club Under 14 Division 2 Girls' team, alongside her dedicated mentor, Jarrod Bone. Well done Julia! Rebecca Monin volunteered as a contestant in the Stars of Parramatta – Dance for Cancer this past July, to help raise funds for the Cancer Council. Encourage to step out of her comfort zone, Rebecca undertook many hours of dance lessons to prepare herself for the competition in honour of her mum and some friends who lost their battle with cancer. Congratulations Rebecca!

**MANNING VALLEY SENIOR CITIZENS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to congratulate Manning Valley Seniors Citizens Association on being a finalist in the Community Group of the Year category at the Myall Lakes Community Awards. Manning Valley Seniors Citizens Association is a dedicated group of volunteers who provide programs and events for the ageing population in the Manning Valley. Their mission is to reduce social isolation, improve the health and wellbeing of seniors, by empowering them to lead a more meaningful and connected life within our local community. Some of our programs and, social activities include, bus outings, lunches, Tai Chi classes, Art classes & workshops, large free library, card and board games and much more. Everyone works together to ensure that members who participate in their programs and activities are treated with respect and dignity, enhancing and enriching the lives of all, through fun and friendship as well learning new skills, at Ormsby House. Can I thank from the executive committee for all their hard work;

- Lucia Bokulic
- Yvonne McMorrine
- Margaret Oirbans and
- Narelle Rogers-Collins

**SHREE SANATAN DHARM PRATINIDHI SABHA**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Australia Inc. and acknowledge its National President Pundit Jagdish Sharma and its General Secretary Yogeshwar Chandra. Among other projects, this group organises an Annual Deepawali Mela Celebration, which is sometimes known as the Hindu Festival of Lights. This event is held at the Northumberland Street carpark in Liverpool over two days and many thousands of visitors are attracted to the Festival. This year the event was held on Saturday the 19th and Sunday the 20th of October – and this was the 13th consecutive year the event was organised by the group. Apart from various live performances, there were more than 40 stalls at the event. The organisation also acknowledges community leaders and volunteers in their Sanatan Rattan presentation at the Celebration. The group is an Australian based Hindu and largely Fijian Indian organisation which aims to promote Indian literature, arts, music and dance so as to promote cross-cultural understanding. It also prioritises the teaching of Hindu scripture and philosophy.

### MARK PLATER RETIREMENT

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to recognise the retirement of Camden Haven's most adored postie Mark Plater after meticulously delivering our mail for 40 years. A local Kendall man born and bred, Mark or 'Snags' as his friends call him started his career briefly in Nambucca Heads before returning home to his grassroots to establish his life as a mailman in Laurieton. On the 1 November Mark made his last delivery on the motorcycle before parking his bike and hanging up his boots on a 40-year career. He remarked about the interactions and special connections he has made as a postie with members of the community over four decades. In the earlier years with Australia Post Mark remembers writing and delivering telegrams to resident's doors and then returning to sort mail and perform the occasional duty behind the counter if required. Mark has seen a lot of technological changes and variations in mail habits since then with parcel deliveries making up the majority of his postal run today. On behalf of the Camden Haven community I extend my thanks to Mark who will be remembered for the wonderful service he has provided with a smile over so many years.

### NORTH SHORE UNICYCLE CLUB

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Minister for Energy and Environment)**—Today I would like to acknowledge a small but dedicated sporting group from Hornsby - the North Shore Unicycle Club. Last year I visited the club and met with founder Laila McKenzie and the Yan family who have become unicycle converts having purchased a unicycle at Aldi. I had a go myself and it is definitely more difficult than it looks. The group who train each week at the Montview Netball Courts in Hornsby Heights also compete in the Australian Unicycle Hockey B League. Last month, for the first time, they won the Championship. I would like to congratulate the team: Laila McKenzie, John McKenzie, Tim Batey, Ben Hutchinson, Michael Kelfkens, Kristy Mackay, Darren Yan, Brandon Yan and Regan Yan. Congratulations on your championship. I know you have worked and trained hard to get this far and I wish you all the best as you continue to help build the profile of the sport in the local community.

### JAN DRAYTON

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—There are so many selfless, dedicated, passionate and inspirational people in the Campbelltown community. One resident who possesses all those attributes is Jan Drayton. Sixteen years ago Jan joined the Campbelltown Hospital Auxiliary after she was invited to have a look at the inner workings of the organisation by a friend. The auxiliary is a vital organisation in Campbelltown, raising much needed funds for Campbelltown Hospital. Jan has held several different positions in the auxiliary since joining. She was the president for five years – a position now held by former Campbelltown Council Mayor Paul Hawker – and secretary for three years. She also held the positions of assistant secretary and vice president. In recognition of her dedication, I surprised Jan with a NSW Community Service last Friday. Jan, as usual, was at the hospital, taking part in the auxiliary's market day. It was fitting that the award was presented to Jan in front of her fellow auxiliary members. The Campbelltown community really is so much better off for having people like Jan in it. Well done Jan, the award – as I'm sure many people will attest to – is well deserved.

### HELENSBURGH LIONS CLUB COUNTRY FAIR

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—I recently had the honour of officially opening the Helensburgh Lion's Club annual Country Fair at Charles Harper Park on Saturday 26th October. It was a fun day for families with over 70 market stalls, raffles, carnival rides, live music and entertainment and collector cars were on display. The club also hosted their famous BBQ stall with funds raised to support hosting the fair and local activities. I take this opportunity to acknowledge local businesses for supporting the event and generously donating prizes for the raffle. I also acknowledge the club for doing their part to help preserve our environment by recycling cans and bottles used at the fair. On the day the club celebrated their 40th anniversary and I acknowledge past and present members for their efforts and contributions to support the local community. The club once again did a remarkable job in organising the event and I commend the President Dennis Weatherall and all members for their hard work.

### INGLEBURN RSL SUB BRANCH AUXILIARY

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields)**—I had the honour of helping Ingleburn RSL Sub Branch Auxiliary NSW volunteers pack care packages to send to Australian troops serving overseas this Christmas. As a member of the Ingleburn RSL Sub Branch Auxiliary myself, I was only too happy to help pack boxes full of goodies, including a variety of food items, a beanie and handmade knitted poppy. A total of 80 boxes were packed and sent from Ingleburn for our servicemen, while seven boxes were packed especially to cater for our servicewomen overseas. The boxes will help boost morale at a time when Australian troops deployed overseas will be particularly missing loved ones. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Ingleburn RSL Sub Branch Auxiliary NSW and all of the volunteers who give generously of their time. A special mention to President, Christine Frame; and President of the State RSL Auxiliaries, Pauline James. Your dedication and community

service is greatly appreciated and Australian troops serving overseas will be most grateful this Christmas for your kind thoughts and generous hearts.

### **BEECROFT AND CHERRYBROOK FIREFIGHTERS**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Treasurer)**—This fire season has been one of the most devastating on record. Six people have lost their lives, 760 properties have been destroyed and fire has burnt through over 1.65 million hectares. Many people in regional New South Wales, already been battling drought, have been dealt another blow. In light of this situation, I want to pay tribute to the efforts of all the professional and volunteer firefighters who have put themselves on the line to assist in combating fires. I also want to recognise our State's emergency service personnel, and especially firefighters from Cherrybrook Rural Fire Service and Beecroft Fire and Rescue. In particular, Firefighters Sullivan, Riley, Madgwick, Kaephne and Freeman, under Station Officer Andrew Borland from Beecroft Fire and Rescue, were instrumental in containing the blaze at South Turramurra as well as in assisting efforts further north. One of the things that makes me proud to be the Member for Epping – and proud to be Australian – is that we are a strong, tight-knit community. And that community is never stronger than when someone is in need. To these brave men and women: I thank you for your service to our communities.

### **PERFECT MATCH**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The inner west is Sydney's cultural capital. The Perfect Match program, which I initiated as Mayor of Marrickville, has grown from a small trial to a pivotal part of the council's annual Edge festival. The program has been immortalised in a new book by street art guide and graphic designer Melinda Vassallo, paying homage to some of the program's greatest creations and capturing so much of what we love about living in the inner west. Perfect Match brings together inner west residents and businesses to collaborate and create one of a kind street art. Perfect Match sees any unused wall as blank canvas for a potential inner west masterpiece. Stunning murals blanket our suburbs, including the latest contribution from Mulga the Artist, an intricate and colourful mural on the wall of Taste Organic on Enmore of an orang-utan playing a guitar. In 2019 alone Inner West Council has commissioned over 20 new street art pieces, from talented contemporary Sydney artists. I congratulate Melinda on the publication of her new book, and congratulate all the artists involved in this year's program: you are making the inner west an even brighter place to be.

### **RICHMOND RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Congratulations to the Richmond River Historical Society on the publication of "A Stroll Around the Block, Exploring Lismore CBD's Heritage". The production of this book has been a passion project of its author, Robyn Braithwaite for the past 18 months, and was launched at the Historical Society's museum last week. I commend the great work that the Richmond River Historical Society do in collecting, preserving, displaying and disseminating the fascinating history of our region. I look forward to continuing to support the great work that they do as Patron of the Society.

### **FLETCHER EARLY LEARNING AND MONTESSORI CENTRE AWARDS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On the 26 October 2019, Fletcher Early Learning and Montessori Centre were awarded the Award for Service Excellence Award (Large Private Regional Service) at the Early Childhood Education Awards. The Awards were hosted by Australian Childcare Alliance (NSW), one of the peak bodies in early childhood learning in NSW. It is a highlight of the calendar year for early childhood educators and providers. The Awards celebrated the achievements, talent and dedication of early childhood educators and providers across 36 excellence award categories. Fletcher Early Learning and Montessori Centre were the only local childcare centre to receive an award. Congratulations to all the staff, Dominique Anstiff, Paula Marks, Katie Selmes, Angela Stuart, Leisa Drayton, Rhiannon Thornell, Brydie Pedersen and Clayton Ball on receiving the award and for all their hard work and dedication to the chosen field of work.

### **WALCHA MOTOR CYCLE WEEKEND**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation)**—I recognise the efforts of Walcha Council, its Mayor Cr Eric Noakes and the fantastic team of staff and volunteers who managed to breathe some life into a festival of motor cycles for Walcha. It was an absolute pleasure to visit Walcha on Saturday to see the many hundreds of visitors who had made a bee-line to Walcha in a time of pretty tough conditions. There were major fires to the east, north-east and south west of the town, but an estimated 500 or so riders with partners and friends made the effort to rally together and provide the town a real shot-in-the –arm. Council tipped in some money and I was able to secure \$4,000 from the Minister for Tourism, Stuart Ayres. As one lady who was a Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service volunteer said it was the busiest Saturday she'd ever seen. Businesses up and down the main street had their doors open and there was plenty of custom. There's enough

energy to look at making this an annual event and I'll be pushing hard to find some support from my Parliamentary colleagues. Thank you Walcha, well done what a fantastic day.

#### **CARLTON SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL COVERED OUTDOOR LEARNING AREA**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I was delighted to attend the official opening of Carlton South Public School's new covered outdoor learning area last week. The new structure provides a sun-safe environment for the activities of students and other community groups. It is big enough to host the entire school for outdoor assemblies, performances and events. The Parents and Citizens Committee have been fundraising to build a COLA for the past four years. They have worked incredibly hard, organising events like colour runs – an event which not only raised money, but was thoroughly enjoyed by the students. The efforts of the P&C helped raise \$100,000 towards this project. More funding was provided by the school and I was thrilled to be able to help this project along with a 2018 Community Building Partnership Grant. A big thank you to school captain's Maddison Laaman and Callum McGee for officially cutting the ribbon to open the new area. Thank you as well to Principal Darren Galea, P&C President Heidi Breeze, and Shelley Ross from Kogarah Community Services for their ongoing commitment to the welfare and development of the children of Carlton South Public School.

#### **NORTHERN RIVERS REGIONAL BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—Outstanding Employer of Choice was won by Richmond Valley Council who I have to say is one of the state's best councils. They're a dynamic, community-focussed team led by General Manager Vaughan MacDonald and Mayor, Robert Mustow and are doing some great things on the ground to make the Richmond Valley a vibrant place to live. Connect Accountants & Advisors had a terrific night winning Excellence in Business & Professional Services, Highly Commended for Excellence in Business and their employee, Ashleigh Little took out Outstanding Young Employee making it a hat trick for them! The Start Up Superstar award went to Amber Cook, Owner of Maclean Podiatry. Excellence in Health, Care & Wellness Industries was won by Anytime Fitness in Grafton. Excellence in Trade, Construction & Manufacturing went to Frontier Pets at Evans Head and Daniel Simpson, Licensee of the Illawong Hotel at Evans Head & Rod n Reel Hotel at Woodburn was awarded Highly Commended Outstanding Business Leader. It's terrific to see these businesses being given due recognition for the wonderful things they are achieving in their workplaces.

#### **LISMORE NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—On Monday, 30 September 2019, I alongside the Member for Ballina Tamara Smith MP, the Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan MP and community members, had to honour to attend and lay a wreath at the National Police Remembrance Day in Lismore. Every year, 29 September holds a special significance for Police not only in Australia but also in New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. In Lismore, we are lucky to have our own Wall of Remembrance, located by the Lismore Memorial Bath in Molesworth Street. Superintendent Toby Lindsay, Commander of the Richmond Police District, delivered the occasional address, while Reverend Graeme Davis OAM CSM said the opening prayer. I acknowledge Sgt Mark Johnston, Ch Insp Suzie Johnston, Sgt David Longfield and District Manager Shellie Smyth for delivering solemn and beautiful prayers of intercession. On this day, we pause and honour officers whose lives have been cut short while performing their duty as a Police officer, through illness or other circumstances. On behalf of the community, I thank them for their service and sacrifice. My sincere sympathy goes to the family members of these honourable officers.

#### **KOALA CHILD CARE CENTRE**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—Congratulations to the team at Koala Child Care Centre ("Koala") for thirty years of providing quality care and education to local children aged six weeks to six years. This unique community-based long day care centre recently celebrated this milestone with current and former families and staff coming together to enjoy the festivities. It was a pleasure to open Koala's new farmyard garden on behalf of our Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP. The farmyard provides children with an unparalleled visual and tactile learning experience and features a chicken coop, pollination station, micro bat box, bottomless pit worm farms, water tanks, citrus fruit trees, vegetable garden and even scarecrows, which were designed and made by the children. I acknowledge the outstanding staff at Koala including Director Fiona Black, Agnes Walkow, Amanda Beck, Anna Mangafas, Carolyn Cryer, Danielle Ivison, Dominique Aust, Jane Stuart, Linda Savi, Madge Colbourne, Magdalani Karimali, Michelle Longworth, Monique Cribb, Nicole Papoulidis, Nikki Hancock, Renee Gordon, Renee O'Connor, Rowena Austin, Sharon Cave, Sheri Williams, Tammie Hodges, Therese Smith and Tiziana Taglialegna. Thank you to the team at Koala for caring for our local children for the past three decades.

### **LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS & THE ILLAWARRA WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I bring to the attention of the House the students of Warilla and Lake Illawarra high schools and their cooperation with the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. Earlier this month, it was announced these local schools would be participating in a research project called, Youth Attitudes to Domestic and Family Violence. This project will survey all students from Year 7 to Year 12, and the data will be passed on to researchers at the University of Wollongong to help develop strategies to combat attitudes in our community that support violence. Shellharbour still has one of the highest rates of domestic and family violence in the state, and it's heart-warming to see young people getting involved and ready to tackle this issue head on. Ms Sally Stevenson, General Manager at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre has been instrumental in this project and worked with the student committees to see it realised. I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Ms Stevenson, and particularly the students of Warilla and Lake Illawarra high schools for getting involved in such a meaningful and inspiring project.

### **INNER CITY LEGAL CENTRE'S SAFE RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate the Inner City Legal Centre on 10 years of service to the community through their Safe Relationships Project. Established in 2009, the SRP is a court and legal support service for LGBTIQ people who are experiencing domestic violence or leaving an abusive relationship. The SRP provides a safe room at the Downing Centre, support at other NSW courts and wrap-around legal assistance and non-legal referrals. Along with the Attorney General, I attended the recent fundraiser for the SRP which secured future work with more than \$10,000 raised. I'm proud to support this important service. Considering the prevalence of domestic and family violence in Australia, including for LGBTIQ people, the SRP is a vital service. Everyone has the right to safety no matter what their sexual orientation. I thank all those who have worked in the SRP over the last 10 years, commend their efforts and trust that it will continue as long as it is needed.

### **COWRA SAKURI MATSURI FESTIVAL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the successful Sakuri Matsuri Festival held in Cowra on Saturday 28 September to celebrate the birth of spring. This year marked the 30th festival with more than 2500 people visiting the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre. A wide range of Japanese cultural activities, performances and martial arts formed part of the festivities as well as a number of market stalls. The festival is a major fundraiser for the Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, a registered cultural organisation that is a symbol of good will, encouraging reconciliation and peace. The garden was built because of the unique relationship between Cowra and Japan, originating from the breakout of over one thousand Japanese prisoners from a Prisoner of War camp during the Second World War. I congratulate Manager Shane Budge and all of the team on a successful event.

### **NEPEAN CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney)**—As the end of the 2019 school year is quickly approaching, I wish to thank and recognise the outgoing Nepean CAPA Leadership team for the positive and valuable contributions they have made across their school community. School Captains: Kelsey Grant and Pedro Donoso, and Vice Captains: Hannan Forsyth and Justin Brooks, thank you and I wish you all the very best for your future pursuits. Additionally, I extend my congratulations to the incoming student leadership team for 2020, Captains: Emily Johnson and Harrison Brennan and Vice Captains: Caitlin Urrio and Ryan Hatch.

### **STEVE JONES**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—Minister for Local Government)**—I congratulate South Coast Surf Lifesaving President Steve Jones on recently being awarded a life membership with Surf Lifesaving New South Wales. Steve joined the Nowra-Culburra Surf Lifesaving Club in 1982 and has contributed significantly to the region over the past 37 years, working closely with the nine Surf Clubs, assisting to secure much-needed funding, upgrades and support from government and the private sector. One of Steve's most significant achievements is securing a new home for South Coast Surf Lifesaving at the Emergency Management Centre in Nowra. This facility once fully complete will provide a hub for training the region's over 3,000 volunteers, as well as administration and storage. I congratulate Steve on this fantastic achievement and the recognition of his continued hard work and determination. On behalf of the entire South Coast community, particularly those who utilise our beaches, I thank him for his dedication, it is through this that so many who utilise our beaches remain safe.

### JIM AND DIANNE SHADOW

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands—Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales)**—I congratulate Inverell's Dianne and Jim Shadlow on their fantastic success at the NSW Veteran Golf Match Play Championship held in Newcastle recently. The pair made history by being the first husband and wife duo to win both the men's and women's competitions in the same year. Dianne and Jim were both graded into division one on handicap and played four rounds of knockout golf at various golf clubs in and around Newcastle in often hot and windy conditions. Dianne and Jim were extremely humble in their victories and should be commended on their hard work and determination throughout the Championship. Living quite the life, Dianne and Jim have spent the better part of this year traveling around in their caravan and playing Veteran's Weeks of Golf competitions throughout Queensland and New South Wales.

### ST GEORGE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate St George Community Transport on their continued hard work to ensure all members of our local community have access to transport. St George Community Transport provide transport services to those who would otherwise have difficulty finding them. This includes the frail, elderly, those with a disability, their carers and others needing transport. This year, they have delivered over 70,000 trips needed in our community. In doing so, they are making a large difference in the lives of many, by encouraging and facilitating mobility and independence. As well as this, St George Community Transport help to foster our area's strong sense of community and selflessness. Speaker, organisations such as St George Community Transport are essential for improving social participation. They are allowing all members of our community to live independently, contribute to our local economy and interact with our local area. On behalf of our community, I would like to thank Chairman Chris Tyler, CEO Carol Strachan and the rest of the St George Community Transport team on the difference they are making.

### AUTISM MATES CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to inform the Parliament of Autism MATES, the fantastic initiative being organised by Randa Habelrih. MATES is an acronym for Mates Assisting To Engage Socially, and the goal of Autism MATES is to empower our young people living with autism by giving them a platform and a voice, so they can be more engaged. I had the pleasure of attending their inaugural Christmas lunch fundraiser. The money from this event will go towards bringing more events to life which empower, employ and upskill our speakers and participants. The big vision of Autism MATES is to open the Autism MATES Cafe, an integrated (not segregated) co-working space for our young people to learn new skills and to contribute their talents to our society. The Autism MATES Café will be a social enterprise created to fill the gap for our young people post-school. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Randa, and everyone else involved in organising this event and this initiative. The role that organisations like these play in the community is crucial, and they can't be thanked enough.

### JESS WARNER

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy)**—Mr Speaker, I rise today to recognise Hammondville resident Jess Warner, who played a major role in starting Hammondcare's Intergenerational Playgroup. Jess regularly volunteers at Hammondcare and having an early-childhood education background, as well as kids of her own, saw an opportunity to provide social connections and opportunities between children and seniors. The Intergenerational Playgroup consists of activities that aged-care residents can also do, allowing them to draw, play and interact with the children. Jess has also formed a connection with Holsworthy Family Group that supports Defence families. This has allowed the playgroup to act as an extended family for defence children, number of which have grandparents who live some distance away. It's great to see the Holsworthy electorate is home to one of the first Intergenerational playgroups in the South-West. People like Jess highlight the incredible community spirit in my area and I would like to congratulate her, and all those involved, for their contribution in establishing this wonderful group.

### PIONEER CLUBHOUSE

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I would like to update the House on the 25th anniversary of Pioneer Clubhouse in my electorate of Manly. The Clubhouse officially began in 1994 and was the first of its kind in NSW. It is a community of people who have the aim of assisting members living with the effects of mental illness. Since coming to know Pioneer Clubhouse I have seen firsthand the dedication of staff such as Tristy Robinson and members such as Brian work together to provide a safe and friendly environment, under the leadership of their Board headed by Chris Lake. I am immensely proud that the Clubhouse continues to be a testimony to changing community attitudes towards mental illness. It is accepting and inclusive as well as empowering and affirming to their members. Congratulations and Happy 25th Birthday Pioneer Clubhouse Balgowlah.

### **MIMOSA FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—Students at Mimosa Public School in my electorate of Davidson helped to stage the annual Mimosa Fireworks Spectacular at Lionel Watts Oval in Frenches Forest on Saturday 16 November. The show is one of the best pyrotechnic displays on the northern beaches and includes rides, food and games, as part of Mimosa Public School's annual fundraising effort. This year's event also supported Drought Angels, a charity helping farmers battle the current dry spell in Australia. I congratulate Mimosa Public School and its students for offering a dazzling show for residents in the community, while raising funds for our farmers. Well done to all involved!

### **NEW SOUTH WALES PRIMARY SCHOOL SPORTS ASSOCIATION'S ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—I am very proud to congratulate some very talented young sports people from my electorate of Charlestown who competed in the New South Wales Primary School Sports Association's (PSSA) Athletics Championships held at Sydney Olympic Park on the 6th and 7th of November 2019. The NSW PSSA provides opportunities for primary aged students to participate in competitive sport at State level and above. Kahibah Public School's Ava Ross won gold medal in the 11 years girls 100 metres in an outstanding time of 13.31 seconds. Hillsborough Public School's Amelia Roberts finished 3rd in the 12 years girls 100 metres. Liam Martin from St Paul's School in Gateshead finished a credible 5th in the Junior discus. These students invest a vast amount of time outside of school hours to train for these events and I commend them for their commitment which has certainly paid off. Congratulations again and all the best to all the students from my local community who compete in a range of sports in this very high level competition.

### **ROTARY POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—The Rotary Club of Sydney recently held their 10th annual awards for the NSW Police Force. These awards provide state-wide recognition to officers and unsworn employees who have exhibited excellence in police service. The awards ceremony is a terrific event which brings together local award winners from all over the state to celebrate the hard work and outstanding achievement of officers, volunteers and civilian employees throughout New South Wales. The NSW Police Force does both a difficult and dangerous job and these awards act as a small token of the community's appreciation for the work that they do. I wish to extend a special congratulations to Senior Constable Holly Mills as the recipient of the prestigious IJ (Irene Juergens APM) Fellowship Award and Constable Michael Faragalla for receiving the Metropolitan Field Operations Police officer of the Year Award, both from Blacktown Police Area Command. I also congratulate all of the award winners from across NSW and extend my gratitude for their efforts in helping to keep our communities safe.

### **FRAN MCKINNON**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—This week the community of Broken Hill farewelled one of its finest members – Francis Lorraine McKinnon. Fran's devotion to Broken Hill was show through her many achievements throughout her life, she was first elected to Council in 1974 and served a remarkable unbroken run of 30 years. She was also the city's first female Deputy Mayor. Fran was a champion for women in politics and served as the Secretary, Vice President, and President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association NSW and was later inducted as a Life Member and in 2014 she was honoured with an OAM for her outstanding service to the community of Broken Hill. I would like to extend my sympathy to Fran's family on their loss. Vale Francis Lorraine McKinnon.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:16 until  
Wednesday 20 November at 9:30.**